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The Emergence of Regional Identity: The Peace River Country, 1910-46

by

Robert Scott Irwin ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1995

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Robert Scott Irwin
10807 52 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 0P2

20 April, 1995

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *The Emergence of Regional Identity: The Peace River Country, 1910-46* submitted by Robert Scott Irwin in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

D. J. Hall
Dr. David J. Hall

R. Macleod
Dr. Roderick C. Macleod

Burton M Smith
Dr. Burton M. Smith

Paul Voisey
Dr. Paul L. Voisey

David C. Johnson
Dr. David C. Johnson

R G Ironside
Dr. R. Geoff Ironside

Dr. G. R. Ian MacPherson
University of Victoria

13 April 1995

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the regional identity expressed by the Euro-Canadian settlement community in the Peace River region of Alberta and British Columbia between 1910 and 1945. Within the settlers in the Peace River region a multitude of identities persisted. Each of these identities existed as an autonomous layer of perception. One layer of identity associated with the regional landscape, the place they call home, can be distinguished. Regional historians of the Canadian and American West have made many efforts to understand regional identity. Some have investigated the political economy of the metropolitan-hinterland relationship. Others have emphasised the environmental constraints upon life in the West. Some suggest that cultural characteristics, in some cases ethnicity or gender, in other cases the capitalist and acquisitive framework of life, provide the foundation for regional identification. Still others argue that the region is little more than perception, or a "region of the mind." My manuscript attempts to bridge the conceptual distances between these different concepts. Inspired by the concept of "limited identities," I attempt to reconcile the diverse interests of regional, environmental, intellectual, social, and economic history to illustrate the complexity of this single layer of identity. In subsequent chapters, I investigate the creation of an aesthetic and utilitarian image for the region, the process of settlement and agricultural development in the new environment, the growth of a speculative economy, the search for an adequate transportation system, and the emergence of regionalism. I argue that four characteristics -- the environment, the settlement culture, the metropolitan-hinterland relationship, and the image of the region -- interact to create this regional identity within the settlement community. As such, the identity has temporal, spatial, and perceptual components.

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Chapter 1
Regional Identity: Environment, Culture, and Imagery

Unjigah. Unchaga. Onthego. All are variations upon the name of a river, the Peace River.[1] The name is first and foremost a reference to a specific phenomenon in the landscape, a river. A powerful and majestic river, the Peace begins west of the Rocky Mountains where the Finlay and Parsnip Rivers intersect. Winding through the mountains as it begins its long journey eastward, the Peace cascades through a narrow canyon and breaches the Rocky Mountain barrier. Escaping from the mountains, the river surges powerfully eastward carving a deep gorge through the surrounding landscape. It is joined by several tributaries, both large and small, each eroding a deep valley of its own and draining the land on the east side of the Rocky Mountains. At the point known as "the Forks" the Peace combines with the Smoky, a powerful river in its own right, and then turns abruptly northward. After 300 kilometres, it resumes its eastward journey near Fort Vermilion. On the northwestern edge of Lake Athabasca, the Peace reaches its destination fanning out to create a huge inland delta, the majority of its flow entering the Slave River on the north side of the Lake.

Besides being a reference point to a particular spatial phenomenon, the name also evokes vivid cultural expressions in the European mind. The word peace has a variety of definitions: a state of calmness and tranquillity; an end to hostility and conflict; a freedom from disturbing emotions; and a biblical reference implying salvation. The term also suggests the very beauty which the eye observes. Rather than a potent instrument able to carve and shape the landscape, the river is a nurturing and calming influence. The story which accompanies the name confirms the romance, mystery, and beauty of the river. Sir Alexander Mackenzie wrote in 1791, "we came to the Peace Point; from which, according to the report of my interpreter, the river derives its name; it was the spot where the Knistineaux [Cree] and Beaver Indians settled their dispute; the real name of the river and point being that of the land which was the object of contention."[2] On the map which accompanied his journal, he called the river "Unjigah or Peace River." But does the name Unjigah represent all the multiple European definitions of peace? The river remains a mystery, even the true name possibly eluding the Europeans.[3]

---

[1] The terms apparently represent the Beaver name for the river and demonstrate the difficulty of moving from an oral to a written language. Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Charles Mair use the term Unjigah to describe the Beaver word. The Anglican Mission at Fort Vermilion utilised this spelling alternatively with Unchaga and explained that the word means Peace. J.G. MacGregor later utilised the spelling Unchaga. The old fur trader who retired in the Peace River valley, Alexander Mackenzie, is the source of the variation Onthego. He also provided a different meaning for the word suggesting the "mighty" river. See W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970), 238; Charles Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), 88; J.G. MacGregor, *The Land of Twelve Foot Davis*, (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Arts, 1952), 55 and 61; Fort Vermilion Mission, *Unjigah*, (Fort Vermilion, 1973), 3; and Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA), Alexander Mackenzie Manuscript, Acc. 74.377.

The Euro-Canadian settlers who arrived in the countryside drained by the river in the twentieth century came to share an identity based upon the river, an identity forged by the combined influences of environment, culture, and perception. The culture of the settlement community in the Peace country resembled other pioneer zones. Ethnic and religious diversity, gender imbalance, a co-operative spirit, and an overarching desire to improve their status characterised the settlers. The pioneers in this region, however, came to believe they were a distinctive community. Although a component of the North American settlement frontier, the Peace Country had an exceptional environment and a special place in Canada's development mythology. The settlers, consequently, came to regard themselves as different from other people. A Peace Country old timer, R.D. Symons wrote:

---

[2] W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie,* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970), 238.

[3] Charles Mair wrote, "Unjigah, its majestic and proper name ... has not taken root in our maps." Instead, he suggested that the formulation of a peaceful relationship between the invading Cree and the defending Beaver Indians at a small point in the River provided the Europeans with the name "Rivière la Paix," the Peace River. Charles Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin*, 88.

> You will look in vain on the map of Canada for a province called "Peace River." Yet in daily conversation throughout the West, one hears the Peace River country spoken of as though it were capitalized; as though it were a legal and surveyed division of Canada. It is, however -- though of empire size -- no more than a region, so that one crossed no boundary to enter it, for it was left out in the arbitrary dividing of the West .. Yet the name stubbornly persists, so that a person from Grande Prairie, will preferably refer to himself as a Peace Riverite rather than an Albertan; while another from Fort St. John is apt to use the same title rather than that of British Columbian.[4]

Would an external observer reach similar conclusions?

Two writers who researched the people within the area tend to agree with Symons. During his work with the Frontiers of Settlement series in the 1930s, sociologist Carl Dawson felt the sense of region in the countryside. While Dawson focused on the social evolution of a pioneer experience rather than regional identity, his work implied that the area existed as a single entity or region and the towns provided an organising force.[5] Similarly, in 1952 J.G. MacGregor explained how living beyond the Athabasca River basin in isolation from other areas

> has knit the people of the Peace River Country into a group with a forward-looking and united outlook. Even a very few years ago, when they spoke of taking a journey to any part of the rest of Alberta, they called it "going outside." Just as overcoming the barrier has brought them some justly felt pride, so it has made them conscious of their place in the sun as citizens of the Peace River Country.[6]

These separate examples all suggest an identity existed, but no study yet has attempted to define or explain it.

Identity is an issue at the forefront of Canadian and American history. The two earliest "schools" of history in North America -- the national schools represented by

---

[4] R.D. Symons, "Monica Storrs: Companion of the Peace," in *God's Galloping Girl*, W.L. Morton and Vera Fast, eds., (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979), xlv.

[5] C.A. Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace River Country,* (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1934), 50-54.

[6] J.G. MacGregor, *The Land of Twelve Foot Davis*, (Edmonton: Applied Arts, 1952), 20.

George Bancroft in the U.S. and George Grant in Canada -- both sought to discover or possibly create a national identity. Intellectual historians have followed in this tradition. Surveying work in Canadian intellectual history, A.B. McKillop contends that Canadian historians' emphasis on a national identity is not only at the forefront, but has directed historical inquiry in this country.[7] In Canada, Carl Berger's *The Sense of Power* and in the United States, Sidney Fine's *Laissez-Faire and the General Welfare State* stand out as examples of intellectual historical studies of identity.[8] Within regional history, two different historiographical schools, one in the United States and the other in Canada, share this accent on identity.

The dominant identity school working on American western regional history is associated with historians Henry Nash Smith and Leo Marx.[9] Referred to alternatively as the "myth and symbol" or "American Studies" school, these writers attempted to survey American culture "as a whole." They attempted to create a dualistic scheme where myth is divorced from reality. Smith explained his concepts of myth and symbol:

> I use the words to designate larger or smaller units of the same kind of thing, namely an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image. The myths and symbols with which I deal have the further characteristic of being collective representations rather than the work of a single mind. I do not mean to raise the question whether such products of the imagination accurately reflect empirical fact. They exist on a different plane. But as I have tried to show, they sometimes exert a decided influence on practical affairs.[10]

In creating this structure, Smith discovered a method for analysing previously ignored questions. As Laurence Veysey perceptively noted, "[t]he flavour of localities often lies captured within their legends. Inexorably the would-be regional historian finds himself drawn towards the pungent stereotypes which comprise the mythology of his terrain."[11] The methodology of the myth and symbol school, however, has been severely criticised for its lack of precision. Lee Clark Mitchell recently noted that "imputing collective beliefs is difficult, and Smith too often assumed those beliefs existed."[12] Despite this shortcoming, Smith's framework held promise for future work.

---

[7] A.B. McKillop, *Contours of Canadian Thought*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987, 3-17.

[8] Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). Sidney Fine, *Laissez-Faire and the General Welfare State*, (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 1956).

[9] Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); and Leo Marx, *Machine in the Garden, Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, (New York: 1964).

[10] Smith, *Virgin Land*, vii.

In Canada, the inspiration for this coming together of regional and intellectual history came from the essays by Ramsay Cook and J.M.S. Careless during the period of heightened Canadian self-awareness following Expo'67. The overriding concern of Canadian historians had previously been the search for a national identity, yet everywhere historians were confronted by division and diversity. Cook and Careless explained that perhaps Canadian historians should stop the search for a "national" identity, and concentrate instead on the "limited" identities of region, class, gender and ethnicity. Maybe it was there, Cook noted, "that Canadianism is found."[13] These important essays became the focal point for a generation of Canadian history students. They gave regional history new respectability and several new studies of regions appeared.

Still, Canadian regional scholars have only begun to examine the creation of identity in a meaningful manner. Despite William Westfall's belief that regional historians, like the intellectual historians, "attempt to solve the age old riddle of the Canadian national identity,"[14] Canadian regional historians have been more interested in the broader economic and political aspects of regionalism. Doug Owram suggests that in Canada, intellectual history's emphasis on myths, symbols, and the relationship of ideas to actions should help foster links with regional, cultural and social history.[15] He notes, however, that the relationship is tendentious at best, and comments that some social historians reject intellectual history as elitist. Indeed, work on western regional identity in the myth and symbol tradition has been confined to a few monographs written primarily by intellectual historians.

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[11] Laurence Veysey, "Myth and Reality in Approaching American Regionalism," *American Quarterly* 12 (Spring 1960), 33.

[12] Lee Clark Mitchell, "Henry Nash Smith and the Mythological West," in *Writing Western History*, Richard Etulain, ed., (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 264-5. For a stinging criticism of the myth and symbol school see Bruce Kuklick, "Myth and Symbol in American Studies," *American Quarterly* 24 (October 1972), 435-50. Leo Marx's defence of the methodology of the American studies school is "American Studies -- A Defense of an Unscientific Method," *New Literary History* 1 (Fall 1969), 75-90.

[13] Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Centennial Cerebrations," *International Journal* (Autumn 1967), 663 and J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* L (March 1969), 1-10.

Doug Owram's *Promise of Eden* (1980), and R. Douglas Francis's *Images of the West* (1989), stand out in this regard. Each attempts to reconcile the perceived reality of imagery and myth with the actual reality of life on the Canadian prairies. They draw extensively on the work of Smith and Marx in an attempt to explain western identity. Owram, for example, credits Smith with his methodological inspiration and states clearly that in his study, "Man reacts to his perception of reality, as well as reality itself."[16] Still both these studies were primarily concerned with the process of image creation. In other words, they examined the images more than the impact of the images on the regional consciousness. Although both suggest a regional impact from the images they present, they emphasise the role of external forces in image creation rather than creation of regional identity within the image. It is time for a regional historian to draw upon the intellectual historian's methods and examine the impact of myth and symbols on regional identity.

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[14] William Westfall, "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (Summer 1980), 3.

[15] Doug Owram, "Writing about Ideas," in *Writing About Canada*, Schultz ed., (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 47-70.

[16] Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992; first published 1980), 6. R.D. Francis, *Images of the West*, (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989).

Cook and Careless were not responsible for the development of regional history in Canada. Indeed, regional history had a long tradition within both the American and Canadian historical communities. Defining the nature of region as a concept has been largely the purview of geographers. Traditional regional geography in North America has catalogued regions into three basic types, formal, functional and administrative.[17] Formal regions are a spatial area in which variations of one or more characteristics fall within a given range. The criteria could include economic activity such as agriculture, demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, population density, and gender balance, or environmental factors such as climate, topography and soil types. Formal regions are thus characterised by homogeneity and similarity. Functional regions are more difficult to define. They refer to a spatial area connected by one or more specific phenomena into a functionally organised whole. Economic relationships with other regions, the movement of people or goods, and communication and transportation systems are the characteristics usually defined in this manner. The third type of region, administrative, is defined politically. Such regions tend to be a political variation of functional regions and can be placed into this category. In his 1981 Presidential address to the Association of American Geographers, John Fraser Hart summarised the work:

> Traditional formal regions had been uniform; the new functional regions were unified, but not uniform; they had considerable internal diversity. Formal regions emphasize patterns, and the inter-relationship of patterns in the forming of the character of places, whereas functional regions emphasize connections between places and spatial interaction. Neither alone is adequate.[18]

The study of regions concentrated on region-specific themes. Rather than simply defining regions, a practice which Hart concluded was trivial, the core concerns of regional geography ought to be the character of the physical environment, regional cultures, and changes in the region produced by external forces.[19] In other words, they should seek to understand and define regional unity.

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[17] The discussion which follows is based upon B.J.L. Berry, *et al.*, *The Geography of Economic Systems*, (1976), 245-49; C. Gore, *Regions in Question*, (London: Methuen, 1984), 9-10; Janine Brodie, *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism*, (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990), 12-14; and Westfall, "On the Concept of Region," 7-10.

[18] John Fraser Hart, "The Highest Form of the Geographer's Art," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72 (March 1982), 11.

In the United States, two traditions exist within the historical literature outside of the geographical context. First, the roots of regional history can be found in the work of Frederick Jackson Turner. His frontier thesis of 1893 became the dominant theoretical framework for studying the history of the American West, and thereby explaining the fundamental characteristics of the American nation. Turner and his defenders, especially Ray Allen Billington, argued that the frontier was the place where both the process of settling new territory and the reshaping of expanding European civilisation existed. While criticised in some circles as environmental determinism, the essence of Turner's thesis had little to do with the environment in the sense of landscape or climate. The important characteristics of American society such as liberal individualism and democracy were created by the pioneering experience rather than the landscape. The West as frontier, therefore, was an intrinsic and essential part of the American nation, but lost its specific spatial place and significance. Few historians today accept Turner's thesis in its entirety, although it has some defenders, but no historian of the American West ignores it.[20] Because of its emphasis on the cultural transitions which occurred when old world systems were placed in the new world environment, the frontier thesis remains one of the important axes in historical understanding of the American West.

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[19] *Ibid.*, 22. Mary Beth Pudup is critical of this approach, claiming that traditional regional geography failed to define region as an analytical tool. "Arguments within Regional Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 12 no. 3 (1988), 368-71.

[20] Gerald Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations 1890-1990,* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991). Nash devotes two chapters of his book to analysing the historiography surrounding Frederick Jackson Turner's Thesis. The best defence of Turner's thesis is Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner, Historian, Scholar, Teacher*, (New York, 1973). For a more limited defence see W. Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier," *Western Historical Quarterly* 18 (April 1987): 157-76 and Martin Ridge, "Frederick Jackson Turner, Ray Allen Billington, and American Frontier History," *Western Historical Quarterly* 19 (January 1988): 5-20.

Despite the popular reputation enjoyed by Turner and his thesis, two other scholars have come to dominate the historical understanding of the American West. Walter Prescott Webb and James C. Malin are the new icons of American regional historians. Their work, like Turner's, is dated, yet together with Turner they provide the structure which governs the historical debate in the United States. Webb and Malin emphasised the American West as a place rather than a process.[21] To a new generation of western American historians such as Robert Swierenga, Donald Worster, and Richard White this emphasis upon environment and landscape restored the regional uniqueness or distinctiveness of their home.[22] Worster wrote that the frontier literature "reveals that the West is just about anything that anyone has ever wanted it to be. That it has been located anywhere and everywhere."[23] Webb and Malin were different. Webb stressed the adaptation of settlement culture to the environment and the importance of technology in this realm. Malin observed man's conflict with the environment, and wrote about the interdependency of that relationship. Although much is made about the different conclusions they reached, both of them placed physical parameters on the American West based upon the landscape and the climate.[24] Within these parameters, they studied human endeavour and behaviour as settlers attempted to conquer or adapt to the land they had adopted. The approach, especially as it was utilised by Malin, could be called ecological. The interaction of frontier and ecological perspectives, of culture and environment, dominated American regional studies.

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[21] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains*, (Boston: Ginn, 1931) and James C. Malin, *The Grasslands of North America: Prolegomena to Its History*, (Lawrence: n.p, 1947), revised by Peter Smith, (Glouster Mass., 1967).

[22] Robert P. Swierenga, ed., *History and Ecology: Studies of the Grasslands by James C. Malin*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); *idem*, "The Malin Thesis of Grassland Acculturation and the New Rural History," in *Canadian Papers in Rural History* volume 5, Donald H. Akenson ed., (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1986), 11-21; and *idem*, "The New Rural History: Defining the Parameters," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1 (Fall 1981): 211-23. Donald Worster, "New West, True West: Interpreting the Region's History," *Western Historical Quarterly* XVIII (April 1987), 141-56 and *idem* "History as Natural History: An Essay on Theory and Method" *Pacific Historical Review*, LIII (February 1984): 1-19. Richard White, "American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field," *Pacific Historical Review* LIV (August 1985), 297-335.

[23] Worster, "New West, True West," 145.

While American historians sought to understand the west as process or place, Canadian historians were involved in a different aspect of regional history. From its earliest beginnings in the work of George Bryce and the "Manitoba School" of the 1880s, Canadian work on the West has sought to understand the relationship between national and regional interests. In this regard, their efforts were similar to Turner's hypothesis and Canadian historians had not ignored the American literature. They dabbled with the frontier thesis in the 1920s and 1930s, but found it wanting.[25] They focused their studies instead on the idea of regionalism. The pre-occupation of their work thus remained finding a place for the region within the dominant nationalist historiography.[26]

That is not to say that the issue of culture and environment did not influence their work. The dominant national histories in Canada were written in the Staples and Laurentian tradition.[27] Although the commercial interests in the St. Lawrence River valley dominated this history, the interpretive framework relied upon geographic and environmental determinants to explain Canadian economic and political development.[28] It focused upon the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and the transportation corridor dominated by this natural waterway. The environment produced a unity of interest between east and west. National history could be explained as the economic and political relationship between the eastern commercial and industrial system and western resource network throughout this environmental system. Rather than examine the regional identity implicit in this system, however, the Laurentian thesis led to an examination of regionalism, or regional tension, within the economic and political system.

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[24] See Swierenga, "Malin Thesis," 11-12; and Worster, "History as Natural History," 4-5 for more information.

[25] Morris Zaslow, "The Frontier Hypothesis in Recent Historiography," *Canadian Historical Review*, 29 (June 1948), 153-67.

[26] Westfall, "The Concept of Region," 13-4. T.D. Regehr, "Historiography of the Canadian Plains after 1870," *A Region of the Mind*, R. Allen, ed., (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1973), 87-90.

[27] The number of books and articles in these traditions are too numerous to list. The staples tradition is associated with the work of economists W.A. Mackintosh and Harold Adams Innis. See W.A. Mackintosh, *Agricultural Co-operation in Western Canada*, (Kingston: Queen's, 1924); and Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, (Toronto, 1930). Donald Creighton is the key writer in the Laurentian traditions. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence*, (Toronto: Ryerson, 1937); and *idem*, *Dominion of the North*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944).

Two challenges to this interpretation emerged in Canadian historical writing, but neither rejected the national scope of study nor the basic environmental model. On the one hand, Metropolitanism focused upon the role of eastern urban centres and the western hinterland communities within the Laurentian system.[29] It suggested that the metropolitan communities influenced and, in certain respects controlled, the political, cultural, social and political aspirations of their hinterlands. It turned the relationship of the Turnerian frontier thesis upside down. The frontier did not change the metropolis, rather the metropolis transformed the frontier. Like the frontier thesis, metropolitanism thus focused Canadian regional history on the West as process. It also contained an implied dependency relationship and thus a rationalisation for regionalism. The hinterland always existed as a source of wealth for the metropolis and no matter how important it became, nor how reciprocal the relationship became, the metropolis always dominated the hinterland area. Under these conditions, a sense of regional alienation from the hinterland within the functional regional relationship would exist.

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[28] Cole Harris, "The Myth of the Land in Canadian Nationalism," *Nationalism in Canada*, Peter Russell, ed., (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966), 27-8. Harris describes the Laurentian thesis as an incantation to the North, a theme caught in geography.

[29] J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXV (March 1954): 1-21. Careless provided further enunciation of the metropolitan concepts in the Donald Creighton lectures, 1987. Careless, *Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities, and Identities in Canada before 1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

Metropolitanism became a dominant theme in Canadian history and the writing in this tradition gained in sophistication. Donald Davis even divided the interpretation into five themes including the Careless model, which he describes as the ecological metropolitan thesis.[30] The theory, however, was of only limited utility in understanding the concept of regional identity. The emphasis on the west as process and the cultural implications of the economic and political relationship dominated metropolitan history. Variations of the metropolitan approach such as the Heartland-Hinterland and Dependency theses, emphasised the dictatorial ability of the metropolis to control the pace and pattern of development in the hinterland.[31] The result for the region, typically, is underdevelopment, resource depletion, and hinterland alienation. Regional identity came from the "group consciousness that voices regional grievances and demands."[32] The key elements of western regional identity within a metropolitan framework, consequently, are the regional political struggles for control of freight rates, tariffs, and Dominion control of regional resources.[33]

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[30] Donald Davis, "The Metropolitan Thesis," *Urban Historical Review* 14, no. 2 (1985), 97.

[31] The essays in L.D. McCann, ed., *Heartland and Hinterland*, (1987) are representative of this important approach to Canadian regionalism. Most work on the Dependency theory in Canada has focused upon the Maritimes. See A.R.M. Lower, "Metropolis and Hinterland," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 70 (Summer 1971), 386-403; and Ralph Mathews, *The Creation of Regional Dependency* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). For a critical overview of the literature see Davis, "The Metropolitan Thesis," 104-9.

[32] L.D. McCann, "Introduction," *Heartland and Hinterland*, vii. For a discussion of the metropolitan and laurentian historian's treatment of region, see John Reid, "Writing About Regions," in *Writing About Canada*, 77-82.

[33] Three excellent examples which demonstrate the continuity of this theme through three decades are Vernon Fowke, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957); Paul Phillips, *Regional Disparities*, (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1978); and J.F. Conway, *The West: The History of a Region in Confederation*, (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983).

On the other hand, Manitoba-born historian W.L. Morton suggested a different alternative, and came closer than any other Canadian historian to explicitly examining regional identity rather than regionalism. He believed his home's identity, the hinterland identity, was more than a simple reaction towards eastern metropolitan domination. He argued that the Laurentian thesis did not acknowledge the distinctiveness of the community in the West, and justified a failure to seek the uniqueness of the western experience. Interestingly, he did not reject the Laurentian view of history nor its environmental focus, seeking instead to add sophistication to it. Carl Berger has called his efforts the "Delicate Balance of Region and Nation."[34]

Morton accepted the relationship between east and west implicit in Laurentian and Metropolitan history. But, he suggested, another relationship, the interaction between the settlement community and the new western environment in which they sought to live, produced distinctive social, cultural and political variation in the region. Morton also emphasised the different ethnic heritage of western Canada when compared with the eastern provinces.[35] W.L Morton's classic text *Manitoba: A History*, and his essay, "A

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[34] W.L. Morton, "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History," *University of Toronto Quarterly* XV (April 1946) reprinted in Carl Berger, ed., *Approaches to Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967): 42-9; *idem.*, "The Bias of Prairie Politics," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Series III, vol. XLIX (June 1955), 57-66. Carl Berger, "William Morton: The Delicate Balance of Region and Nation," in *The West and the Nation*, Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook, eds., (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 9-32.

[35] Morton was not the first historian to recognise the impact of a distinctive ethnic foundation and the environment on the settlement community. In 1937, W.N. Sage wrote: "European immigrants have brought much to the Prairies. One has only to attend a folk song and handicraft festival to realize that. But the prairie has added its contribution, something intangible but none the less real. It may be the sense of vastness; it may be a deeper note of tragedy when crop failure succeeds crop failure; or it may be the reckless optimism of oil booms and dollar and a half wheat. The prairie sets its mark on all who come to it. It is not easy to analyse its effects but no one has lived there and remained the same as he was before he came to that land of vast distances." W.N. Sage, "Geographical and Cultural Aspects of the Five Canadas," *Canadian Historical Association, Annual Report 1937*, 33.

Century of Plains and Parkland," provide the best examples of this interpretation.[36] As Paul Voisey has pointed out, however, Morton could not divorce himself from the national "as seen through the community approach."[37] Still, Morton's work placed an emphasis on the west as place, and together with the work of the Metropolitan historians demonstrates that in Canada, as in the United States, regional history debated the varying emphasis of environment and culture, of formal and functional regional characteristics.

Regional history had thus developed a distinctive pattern prior to the publication of the centennial essays by Cook and Careless. Just as their essays did not create regional history, they did not result in an immediate transformation of Canadian regional history. The concept of "Limited Identities," after all, still implied a national identity could be discovered. Cook and Careless both suggested that analysis of a regional consciousness would add to a better understanding of the whole nation. In Canada, therefore, the traditional importance of economic and political regionalism continued. This emphasis on national issues overshadowed the regional, or the local, concerns.[38] Their essays instead encouraged a number of new scholars to enter the field of regional history. They began to integrate the work of American writers and the French *Annales* school into their work. Careless's phrase, "Limited Identities," became the staging post for a new and sophisticated reinterpretation of Canadian regional history. As more historians focused on the region following Cook and Careless's work they began to shift their orientation towards a concern for the peculiar regional issues, but the conflict over environmental or cultural determinants remained. Few seemed to heed the call of Laurence Veysey for a coming together of regional and intellectual history.[39] The increased writing, nevertheless, inevitably led to a new synthesis.

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[36] W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, (Toronto, 1957); and "A Century of Plains and Parkland," in *The Prairie West*, R.D. Francis and Howard Palmer, eds., (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), 27-42.

[37] Paul Voisey, "Rural Local History and the Prairie West," *Prairie Forum*, 10 (Autumn 1985), 331.

[38] David R. Cameron, "The Imperatives of Change: Regionalism in Canadian Life," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 15 (Summer, 1980), 2 and 127. One work which marks the high point of economic and political regionalism in Canadian historical writing is David Bercuson, ed. *Canada and the Burden of Unity* (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1977). The continued stress placed on the difference between region and nation in Canadian regional history led both Cook and Careless to question their original vision. Ramsay Cook, "The Burden of Regionalism," *Acadiensis* VII (Autumn 1977), 110-115; *idem.*, "Regionalism Unmasked." *Acadiensis* XIII (Autumn 1983), 137-42; and J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities -- Ten Years Later," *Manitoba History* 1 (Summer 1980), 3-9. The continued stress on regionalism as a part of the national political and economic system is apparent in Janine Brodie's recent text *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism*.

The conflict between environmental and cultural determinism first had to be resolved. Historical geographers incorporated regional geography into their studies and began an analysis of the American and Canadian West. They brought scientific rigour to the study of regional consciousness.[40] Historical regional geography stressed the interaction of the two most explicit forms of formal and functional regions. Drawing upon the dual trends in American western history, they sought to understand the interaction of environment and culture, the West as place and process.[41] This debate had simmered since the work of Webb and Malin as geographers and historians had struggled to understand which of the two concepts took precedence. Early work had emphasised either the environment or culture, but rarely both, as the determinative factor.[42]

The study of culture achieved paramountcy in the 1960s and 1970s, and most scholars attacked environmental determinism as the source of regional identity. Works by Robert Berkhofer Jr., J. Wreford Watson, R. Cole Harris, and John Warkentin, for example, found the environmental theme limiting.[43] An identity formed by the environment did not explain local differentiation within the formal regional boundaries nor did it provide an explanation for the systems of land utilisation. Berkhofer's work deserves special mention. He discovered that the cultural model of capitalist pursuit of profit and resource exploitation was more important to understanding western American agriculture than environmental adaptation. Taking another example, in his study of western American towns, John C. Hudson claimed that any differences between these communities and their eastern counterparts were determined by the time of formation instead of through environmental adaptation.[44] Other scholars wondered why people in the southern Canadian prairies and northern plains States exhibited cultural, social, and political differentiation. The only explanatory rationale had to be the paramountcy of culture in determining identity.

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[39] Veysey, "Myth and Reality," 42.

[40] D.W. Meinig, "The Historical Geography Imperative," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 79 no. 1 (1989): 79-87.

[41] The essays in Brian Blouet and Frederick Luebke, eds., *The Great Plains: Environment and Culture*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979) are excellent examples of this work.

[42] See for example Howard W. Odum and Harry Moore, *American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration*, (New York: Holt, 1938) or Carl Kraenzel, *The Great Plains in Transition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955). Several writers can be placed in the cultural or environmental category. See Frederick C. Luebke, "Introduction," in *The Great Plains: Environment and Culture*, Brian Blouet and Frederick Luebke, eds., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979): ix-xxvii.

Regional historians in Canada built upon this interpretation, and the history of settlement and western Canadian development took on new dimensions. Canadian emphasis on the mosaic or multi-cultural nature of Canada led to work on the Ukrainian, Mennonite, and British experiences in the West. These studies surveyed both the ethnic groups themselves, and the relationships between ethnic groups in the west.[45] Similar work by Frederick Luebke and Theodore Salutos among others in the United States reflected this pattern by exploring ethnic variations in the settlement experience. Cultural explanations, or the west as process, dominated the writing in the 1970s.

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[43] Robert Berkhofer, Jr., "Space, Time, Culture, and the New Frontier," *Agricultural History* 38 (January 1964): 24-38; J. Wreford Watson, *North America: Its Countries and Regions*, (New York: Praeger, 1967); R. Cole Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada: A Geographical Study*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966); John Warkentin, "The Desert Goes North," in *Images of the Plains, The Role of Human Nature in Settlement*, Brian Blouet and Merlin Lawson, eds., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 149-63; *idem.*, "Steppe, Desert and Empire," in *Prairie Perspectives* 2, A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, eds., (Toronto: Holt Rhinehart, 1973), 102-36. Geographers played a leading role in this attack. See Hart, "The Geographer's Art," 7, and Westfall, "The Concept of Region," 7. Gerald Nash explained that the new emphasis on culture grew out of a mood of pessimism in the United States. This pessimism led to a focus on the experience of minority groups and their cultures. Nash, "The Great Adventure: Western History, 1890-1990," *Western Historical Quarterly*, XXII (Fall 1991), 11.

[44] John C. Hudson, "The Plains Country Town," in *The Great Plains: Environment and Culture*, 99-118.

Other regional historians began to study particular events or themes within the region. John Herd Thompson's *The Harvests of War* is the best study of regional identity to emerge in Canada during the 1970s.[46] He examined the impact of the Great War on the Canadian Prairies and incorporated aspects of intellectual, economic, cultural, and political history into his account. Thompson illustrated how the Great War had amplified certain social and economic tendencies in western Canada. Capitalist farmers, for example, sought windfall profits during the war rather than deal with the environmental and structural problems of agriculture. Similarly, social reformers used the war as a weapon to further their aims and won the long desired programs of women's suffrage and prohibition. His interpretation of regional identity, however, rarely strayed from the hinterland traditions of the Laurentian thesis and the ethnic emphasis of the cultural historians.

Historians in the United States and Canada have led the counter-thrust of renewed interest in the environment. The influence of the *Annales* school is important in this regard. In his *Mediterranean*, Fernand Braudel made space into an historical actor and, as historians attempted to utilise the insights of his work, they accepted his geo-historical emphasis.[47] In a different direction, Robert Swierenga and Donald Worster looked to Malin and Webb for their environmental approaches, as does Canadian historian Paul Voisey.[48] But, Richard White clearly points out that better environmental history does not use environmental determinism. Instead, it stresses the relationship between the landscape and other issues.[49] By the late 1970s and the 1980s, a recognition of the joint relevance of culture and environment began to take shape.

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[45] Alan Anderson, "Prairie Ethnic Studies and Research: Review and Assessment," *Prairie Forum* 7 (Fall 1982), 155-70. Howard Palmer, "Canadian Immigration and Ethnic History in the 1970s and 1980s," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17 (Spring 1982), 35-50.

[46] John Herd Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, (Toronto McClelland and Stewart, 1978). See also the two articles "The Beginning of Our Regeneration: The Great War and the Western Canadian Reform Movements," *Historical Papers/Communications Historique* (1972), 227-246 and "Immediately Profitable but Permanently Wasteful: Western Canadian Agriculture during World War One," *Historical Papers/Communications Historique* (1976), 193-206.

In a series of essays, Frederick Luebke has outlined this new interpretation. He argued that neither environment nor culture can be excluded from any interpretation of identity.

> [E]ver since the earliest human habitations in the region, environmental forces have compelled men to adjust their ways to climatic changes, topography, and locational relationships. At the same time, cultural traits, imported in migrant streams, frequently survived in unfamiliar and sometimes uncongenial environments.[50]

Luebke draws on the work of Berkhofer and Hudson to explore the relationship further. Temporal relationships, he argues, have equal status within this system.[51] The explanation for regional development, therefore, had to consider environment, culture, and time. His work, nevertheless, seems less concerned with identity, in other words people's perception of themselves, than with development. Like the social historians, Luebke stresses relationships almost to the exclusion of ideas.

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[47] For a good introduction to the *Annales* see Stuart Clark, "The *Annales* historians," in *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, Quentin Skinner, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 177-98; or Samuel Kinser, "Annaliste Paradigm? The Geohistorical Structuralism of Fernand Braudel," *American Historical Review* 86 no. 1 (1981), 63-105. John Herd Thompson suggests the influence of *Annales* in Canada has been limited to Quebec historians. While he is correct that the concept of total history has never been adopted by Western Canadian historians, many have been influenced by the geo-historical concepts of this school. Thompson, "Writing about Rural Life and Agriculture," in *Writing About Canada*, 98, 101-2.

[48] Swierenga, "The Malin Thesis," 11; Worster, "New West, True West," 141-2; and Voisey, *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 4.

[49] White, "American Environmental History," 323.

[50] Luebke, "Introduction," in *The Great Plains,* xxv.

[51] Luebke, "Regionalism and the Great Plains: Problems of Concept and Method," *Western Historical Quarterly* 15 (January 1984), 35.

Louis Hamelin's *Canadian Nordicity: Its Your North Too* illustrates the new trends.[52] A cultural geographer, Hamelin did not concern himself with history, but attempted to address the north as a modern concept. He created a definition of north, a nordicity factor, which united culture and environmental determinants. Latitude and climate are considered as only two of many factors leading to a definition of north. They must be considered in conjunction with information about transportation, isolation, economic activity, and demography. Each of these factors received a numerical reference, and areas achieving a certain nordicity value could be considered northern.

On the prairies, Don McGowan, David Jones, and Paul Voisey have all conducted thorough studies of specific localities which fit into this pattern of study. In the preface to his book on Swift Current, McGowan argued that no single explanation for the development of the Swift Current region existed. While environmental and economic factors seemed most important, transplanted institutions such as law, churches and schools played an important role.[53] In a better and more thorough examination of the Vulcan area of Alberta, Voisey came to similar conclusions. He argued that the community could only be understood through the combined influence of the environment, the metropolis, and the traditions or culture of the settlers.[54]

A few geographers emphasised the relationship between perception and reality,[55] but failed to recognise perception or imagery as an explicit characteristic of regional identity. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, however, makes it clear that human reality exists as a combination of realism and fantasy.[56] David Bercuson's essay in the special *Journal of Canadian Studies* edition on regionalism hints at this new orientation. Regional historians, Bercuson noted, focused on "political development, resource ownership, economic policies, transportation patterns and the impact of communication systems, but have rarely studied the nationalizing process itself ...."[57] He argued that the process of creating an identity in new immigrants, the nationalising process, helped to create a regional, rather than national identity. He drew together elements of environment and culture in his explanation.

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[52] Louis Hamelin, *Canadian Nordicity: Its Your North Too*, (Montreal: Harvest House, 1978).

[53] McGowan, *Grassland Settlers*, v.

[54] Voisey, *Vulcan*, 5.

[55] John Warkentin, "Steppe, Desert and Empire," in *Prairie Perspectives 2*, A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, eds., (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, 1973), 102-36. D.W. Meinig, "The Historical Geography Imperative," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 79, no. 1 (1989), 79-87.

> The Ukrainian farmer in central Alberta quickly learned about the prairie west -- or he did not survive. His regionalism was born and nurtured in the bitter cold of winter, the heat of summer sun on dusty roads, the great canopy of the sky. His community was one of wheat growers and wheat townspeople who shared common concerns.... If the Ukrainian farmer from central Alberta was to develop strong and binding national loyalties, he had to learn them since he did not actually experience them.[58]

Bercuson, however, was not satisfied with a strictly environmental and cultural characterisation of regional identity, and he speculated that ideas played a key role. "Clearly some of the grievances that stimulate the growth of regional feeling," he noted, "exist in the mind only. Attitude itself has created and sustained alienation and regionalism in the West."[59]

Bercuson was not alone in believing that attitudes or ideas or mythology were important characteristics of regional identity. In a series of essays, literary historian Eli Mandel had also broached this subject. Studying Western Canadian literature, Mandel discovered a portrayal of the landscape and life on the Canadian prairies at variance with reality.[60] William Westfall suggests this literary criticism can be explained as a conflict between environment and culture. Mandel's interpretation, however, seems to separate the imagery from these components. He defines the term prairie as "a sort of complex conceptual framework within which various social inter-relationships can be viewed and understood. It is difficult to keep steadily in mind that "prairie" means nothing more than this, that it is a mental construct, a region of the human mind, a myth."[61] In other words, the West is at once real and imagined.

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[56] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Realism and Fantasy in Art, History, and Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 3 (1990), 435-46. David Jones probably comes closest to this orientation with his emphasis on the transformation of Medicine Hat from the place where blizzards originated into an agricultural paradise. *Empire of Dust*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988), chapter 1.

[57] Bercuson, "Regionalism and "Unlimited Identity" in Western Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (Summer 1980), 121.

[58] *Ibid.*, 124.

[59] *Ibid.*, 125.

Historians Gerald Friesen and R.D. Francis have made the most recent attempts to explain regional identity as a combination of environmental, cultural and imaginary characteristics. In a 1973 article, Friesen highlighted the importance of myth to understanding "regional consciousness." He did not reject the importance of political and economic factors which earlier historians had discovered, but tried to add a new theme. "Region, in this view," he argued, "is a state of mind which changes as men's attitudes and relationships change."[62] Regional scholars such as W.L. Morton, Vernon Fowke, John Conway, Paul Phillips and Janine Brodie correctly identified western protest against eastern metropolitanism, he noted, but

> [i]n each case the assumption that regions existed, and that regional interests were primary interests in community life, and that regionalism was a fundamental interpretation of social organisation, underlay their dissent. This cultural perspective, a supplement to the economic and political analysis, is pivotal to our appreciation of the regional 'imagined'

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[60] Mandel, "Images of Prairie Man " in *A Region of the Mind*, Richard Allen, ed., (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1973), 201-9. Also look at Mandel, "Romance and Realism in Western Canadian Fiction," in *Prairie Perspectives* 2, 197-211.

[61] Mandel, "Images of Prairie Man," 202-3.

[62] Gerald Friesen, "The Western Canadian Identity," CHA, *Historical Papers/Communications Historique*, 1973, 14.

community that had just taken shape.[63]

In a similar fashion, Francis argues that a study of "images particular to the Canadian West is a study of how the region perceived and defined itself, hence a study in regional identity."[64]

Although Canadian historians have thus recognised the importance of all three elements of regional consciousness, Friesen points out that attempts to deal with all three simultaneously have been less than successful.[65] Geographer Ronald Rees' book *New and Naked Land* comes closest to fulfilling this task in Canadian scholarship. In it he argues that immigrants had a conception of the west implanted in their minds prior to settlement. Upon arrival, however, they were confronted with the stark homogeneity of the landscape, the brutal winter, and the silence of isolation.[66] Perhaps the best example of this effort to reconcile all three elements, however, is the recent survey of the American West by Richard White. White attempts to unite the original imagery of the west, its environmental characteristics, the ethnic diversity and differentiation, and the culture of hinterland relationships, to understand the mythology of region -- the identity -- which exists. He argues that historians cannot understand the relationship between the imagined, or mythic west, and the historic west because they cannot be separated. The two concepts are engaged in a "constant conversation."[67]

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[63] Friesen, "The Prairies as Region: The Contemporary Meaning of an Old Idea," in *The Constitutional Future of the Prairie and Atlantic Regions of Canada,* James N. McCrorie and Martha L. Macdonald, eds., (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1992), 9.

[64] R.D. Francis, "In Search of a Prairie Myth," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24 (Fall 1989), reprinted in *From Riel to Reform*, George Melnyk, ed., (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1992), 36.

[65] Friesen, "The Prairies as Region," 1-17.

[66] Ronald Rees, *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairie Home*, (Saskatoon: Prairie Books, 1988), 36-7, 43, and 60-68.

[67] Richard White, *"It's your misfortune and none of my own": A New History of the American West*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 613-5.

This conversation between a historic and imagined west makes possible a re-examination of earlier regional concepts. Literary historian Richard Slotkin has looked at the Frontier thesis.

> The Myth of the Frontier is arguably the longest lived of American myths, with origins in the colonial period and a powerful continuing presence in contemporary culture....Its ideological underpinnings are those same "laws" of capitalist competition, of supply and demand, of Social Darwinian "survival of the fittest" as a rationale for social order, and of "Manifest Destiny" that have been the building blocks of our dominant historiographical tradition and political economy.[68]

In other words, the frontier thesis is more than an historical interpretation of western regional past, it is a part of the history of the region itself. The frontier thesis became, or perhaps always was, a part of the regional identity. A similar example could be found in boosterism. Alan Artibise has examined boosterism primarily as a phenomenon of urban elites attempting to make fantastic windfall profits from their enterprises. Yet boosterism, like the frontier thesis, is a part of the mythology of the west. It helped to create the imagery so essential to the regional identity.[69]

Work on regional identity has thus taken a new direction. The regional scholar must define the region in terms of environment, culture, and perception. The identity which forms within this framework, or perhaps is created by the interaction of these factors, will be unique. The continued importance of the national identity, consequently, becomes a hindrance to regional research. Rather than searching for a unit of the whole, in other words limited identities, the historian needs to search for a distinctive regional identity as one component in "layered identities." In this way, regional historians can break from the old tradition of studying political and economic grievances as manifestations of regionalism.

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[68] Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890,* (New York: Antheneum, 1985), 15.

[69] Alan Artibise, "Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871-1913," in *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development,* Alan Artibise, ed., (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1981), 209-35. For an example of how boosters influenced identity as well as environmental perception see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great North-West*, (New York: 1991).

Defining the Peace River region is in many ways the task of this thesis. Formal, functional, and imagined definitions of the Peace River region co-exist. It is impossible to claim that a single definition exists in geographical or historical terms. The difficulty of defining the region in terms of formal factors such as the environment is demonstrated in the literature on Peace River Country. The Federal government attempted to use the survey to define the countryside. In 1916 they described the Peace Country as lying north of township 68, south of township 113 and east of Range 8 west of the fourth meridian. F.H. Kitto, a Department of the Interior expert on northern Alberta, described the Peace Country as extending from 54-59 degrees of latitude and from 112-125 degrees east longitude. Such a region is exceptionally large and includes the Athabasca River drainage basin in the south and the Rocky Mountains in the west. Indeed, this could best be described as the Peace River watershed -- a total of 74,000,000 acres or nearly 116,000 square miles.[70] In his excellent collection of excerpted documents, Gordon Bowes expanded this formal definition even further, including the Finlay and Parsnip River basins in the interior of the Rocky Mountains in his definition of the Peace Country.[71] Carl Tracie produced a more realistic geographic description by reducing the southern limit to 55 degrees of latitude and the eastern limit to 115 degrees east.[72] Even if an acceptable description of the geographic boundaries of the Peace Country could be obtained, a homogenous geographic experience would not result. Within the watershed of the Peace exist a variety of botanically, climatically, and geologically distinct micro-regions. Equally important, these formal definitions of the Peace River region include several regions which would not be considered the Peace River country in a historical or functional sense.

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[70] Canada. Department of the Interior, *Description of Surveyed Townships in Peace River*, (Ottawa, 1916), 7; F.H. Kitto, *The Peace River District* (Ottawa, 1919), 7.

[71] Gordon Bowes, *Peace River Chronicles*, (Vancouver: Prescott Publishing, 1963).

[72] Carl Tracie, "Agricultural Settlement in the Peace," MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1967, 6.

Both Morris Zaslow and Carl Dawson attempted to define the Peace River region in functional terms. Although his work demonstrated none of the optimism found in Turner's frontier thesis, Carl Dawson utilised several Turnerian concepts in his book on Peace River settlement. Indeed, the agricultural settlement frontier defined his Peace River country. The region, therefore, existed not as a static place, but as a dynamic process within a generalised location.[73] Zaslow came closer to discovering a workable regional definition in his work. He concluded that the Peace River country was part of the larger Mackenzie Basin, and he noted the difficulty of finding areas of common interest or historical unity. He finally settled on the two concepts of the Mackenzie Basin as an abstract ideological construct and an economic hinterland. On the one hand, he argued the Mackenzie region existed because it was thought to exist. On the other hand, the region existed through its relationship with the Metropolis. He found that such a unity existed in the areas of transportation and communication during the period of transition from fur trade to agriculture. But he acknowledged that the introduction of agriculture into the Peace River country and the growing importance of mineral products in other sections of the Mackenzie watershed destroyed any a geographical, political or occupational homogeneity within the Basin.[74] Both Dawson and Zaslow's functional conceptions of the region, moreover, sever the Peace from its distinctive environmental context.

Since formal, functional and imagined regions exist, and both formal and functional definitions are not easily discovered, it seems appropriate to begin the thesis with the creation of an imagined region. Metropolitan scientists, surveyors, promoters, and speculators created an image of the Peace River region between 1870 and 1910. This imagined region then interacted with both the formal, environmental features of the region, and its historical, functional characteristics. Beginning with the imagined region also solves the difficult problem of establishing a starting point for the thesis.

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[73] Carl Dawson, *The Settlement of the Peace*, (Toronto: Macmillan and Company, 1934).

[74] Zaslow, "The History of Transportation and Development in the Mackenzie Basin from 1871-1921," MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 1948, 3.

Donald Worster argues that the history of a "region" must begin with the native people. The native community, after all, have utilised the region as a home and resource base for 10,000 years. More recently, the descendants of early indigenous inhabitants, the Beaver, Cree and Chipewyan, all lived in or used the area as hunting and trapping zone. Any historian "who does not begin with their story, their interaction with the place," claims Worster, "continues the injustice of their expropriation."[75] Worster's framework, however, does not account for the mythic component of regional identity. Working from a different perspective, Richard White makes a case for beginning the history of a region with the arrival of the Europeans and their attempt to conquer the wilderness. Beginning the history of the American West with native people he suggests is a disservice to that community since their history is not the history of the American West. The American West, he argues, was created by the interaction of European, Asian, African and Indian peoples within the areal boundaries of the region. "Geography did not determine the boundaries of the West," he wrote, "rather, history created them."[76] By beginning with the imagined region, a regional definition created by the Euro-Canadian settlement community, White's starting point makes sense.

Hence this thesis begins with the encroachment of Europeans into the area. The earliest arrivals, fur traders, scientists, and railway surveyors created an imagined region. The Peace Country was the "garden of the Dominion" and destined to be one of Canada's best wheat producing areas. Settlers entering the Peace accepted this vision and expected to fulfill its promise. Arriving in the Peace River region, the surveyors and settlers encountered the magnificent Peace River valley and the undulating plateaux of prairies. Many were overwhelmed by the beauty after weeks travelling through mosquito infested muskegs along forested trails. The river soon played a powerful, mythological role in their identity, and they created "the land of the Mighty Peace."

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[75] Worster, "New West, True West," 148-9.

[76] Richard White, *A New History of the American West*, 3-4.

The Peace River country soon became a component of the North American settlement frontier, but it remained a distinctive region. The Peace River country had an atypical environment. First, it was further north than any other section of the settlement zone, meaning that its climate, hours of sunshine, and susceptibility to frost were significantly different than other areas. Second, its soils were unfamiliar to most settlers, variable, and required new farm techniques to produce adequate crops. And third, the region was isolated from other settlement zones by the Athabasca watershed in the South, and the Rocky Mountains in the west.

The culture of settlement in the region, however, was rooted in the earlier settlement frontiers. Like other areas of the Canadian west, settlers came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Each group brought a different perspective to life in the pioneer zone, and different adaptive tactics. Most expected to improve their standard of living, and many sought windfall returns from their adventure. In general they accepted the capitalist, commercial orientation of twentieth century Canadian agriculture. Moreover, the settlers sought to recreate and improve the society they had left. They created school districts, built country churches, established community clubs, and clamoured for modern transportation and communication services. Like other settlement zones, they resented the metropolitan economy and political system.

This thesis investigates the interaction of the imagery, the environment, and the settlement community and, in the process, attempts to explain the regional identity which emerged in the Peace Country between 1910 and 1946. Rather than a simple idea or perception, the regional identity is complex and multi-layered. In subsequent chapters, the thesis explores some of the elements of this identity. These include image creation, demography, the settlement process, the adaptation of agricultural to the environment, the development of a speculative economy, transportation and communication, and regional political culture. Each of these subjects played a key role in the creation of the Peace River regional identity. Each helps demonstrate particular aspects of the regional identity complex.

Chapter 2
The Empire of the Peace, 1870-1911: Science, Imagery, and the Landscape

Unjigah. The Peace River. It is both the object of perception, and the subject of imagery. It dominates the countryside. The valleys created by the Peace and its tributaries have thrilled explorers, scientists, adventurers, and settlers with their magnificent charm and splendour. The plateaux above the river greet the observer with the stark contrast between boreal forest and prairie, between muskeg, slough, and fertile grain land. Few people have seen the countryside and not been touched by its power. Railway surveyor and photographer Charles Horetzky called it "A Noble Landscape." He wrote, "We had at length reached the long-looked-for goal of our hopes, and resting our nags for a little, we feasted our eyes on the glorious landscape now mapped out before us." The river dominated his vision.

> [A] boundless and nearly level expanse of country could be taken in at a glance, the only breaks being the great valleys of the Peace and Smoky Rivers, than which nothing we had ever seen could be more beautiful, the former especially, in its magnitude and depth, surpassing all we had anticipated. The width of the valley at this point cannot be less than two and a-half miles; and the banks, covered with verdure, and showing occasionally clumps of wood, slope downwards to the water edge in varied yet ever graceful form.[1]

In a world still struggling with the Darwinian concept of nature, the Peace River appeared to be a symbol of God's genius.

The impact of the Peace River on the people who visit its banks, or live in its vicinity cannot be overstated. The Beaver maintain that once a person has drunk water from the Peace, they will always return.[2] The fur traders who plied its waters for a century had similar experiences to relate. In 1908, Alexander Mackenzie, a former

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[1] Charles Horetzky, *Canada on the Pacific: Journey from Edmonton to the Pacific by the Peace River Valley*, (Montreal: Dawson, 1874), 34-5.

[2] The source of this legend is impossible to determine. It is, however, widely accepted. Poems, plaques, and local histories all acknowledge it.

Hudson's Bay Company employee and resident of Peace River Crossing, observed in his history of the region, "[f]rom the time of the return of Sir Alexander Mackenzie even among the imployees [sic] of the different trading companys [sic] down to the dawn of the twentieth century, the very name of the Peace River reeks of Romance and Adventure, and of what charm and beauty many have heard but very few have been fortunate enough to see it."[3]

Mystery and romance about the Peace River region fits neatly into the Euro-Canadian search for an "Eden." The creation of imagery about the Peace was neither unusual nor unique.[4] Richard Slotkin has commented that the image of an Eden-like frontier is encoded in the North American experience and identity. The settlement of new territory took place in a system derived from the American colonial experience. North America itself represented an escape from the Metropolitan, and if the new land, the Frontier, was Eden, then the old land, the Metropolitan, became the opposite. All promoters from the English and Spanish planters to railway salesmen of the 1880s made out the new world to be an Eden, a "Garden of Earthly delights." The central theme was "the association of all progressive or desirable change -- whether of fortune or moral character -- with a physical movement outward from the Metropolis....This story implied the existence of two geographical poles: the Metropolis, with a predominantly negative character (else why should we leave it?); and the wilderness Frontier, necessarily with a rich endowment of good things to appeal so strongly to us."[5] The discovery of new frontiers, of Eden, had become necessary. "[T]he end of the Frontier was imagined as a permanent expulsion from Eden, to be followed by subordination, poverty, toil and strife."[6] The Peace River country represents the final frontier, the last vestige of Eden.

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[3] PAA, Alexander Mackenzie Manuscript, Acc. 74.377.

[4] Gerald Nash notes that a utopian western American image emerged in the period 1890 to 1920. He points to the influential and popular novels of Owen Wister, Frank Norris, and Steven Crane as examples of this new image. Gerald Nash, *Creating the West*, 207-15. Paula Nelson also demonstrates that a new image of the Great Plains emerged around 1900 which welded history and fantasy to create romance and adventure. Paula Nelson, *After the West was Won*, 16. Most literature in Canada concentrates on the earlier 1870 to 1890 period. See Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden* and R.D. Francis, *Images of the Prairies*.

Despite Horetzky's wonder and amazement, the Beaver legend, and Mackenzie's romance, historical writing about the Peace has missed the powerful impact of the river and the landscape on the people's images of the region. Identifying Eden in a utilitarian sense, Zaslow, Bowes, Tracie, and Waiser focused primarily on the scientific appraisal of the region as a potential agricultural zone.[7] The conflict over the suitability of the climate and soil quality is especially significant. All their studies point to the contradictions within the exploration reports and attempt to explain how and why such divergent viewpoints existed. Zaslow and Waiser emphasise the influential role of Dominion government policy; Tracie the mind-set of the explorer. This assessment of imagery focuses attention upon the Euro-Canadian search for prosperity emphasised by recent writers about the western North American agricultural settlement community.[8] Forgotten in this historical literature is the landscape and the beauty of the Peace Country itself. The overall appraisal of the Peace River country as a future settlement zone, as the last Eden, originated not only in the utilitarian image of an agricultural frontier, but also in the emotional image of an untamed, beautiful, pastoral wilderness. Both images help to explain how and why development occurred and identity formed. Both help define the region.

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[5] Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, 35. Nash agrees suggesting the contrast became a "noble" west with an "ambivalent" urban industrial community. Gerald Nash, *Creating the West*, 208.

[6] Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, 40.

[7] Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," chapter 2; Bowes, *Peace River Chronicles*, 89-92, 129-33, 211-13; Carl Tracie, "Land of Plenty or Poor Man's Land," in *Images of the Plains*, Brian Blouet and Merlin Lawson, eds., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 115-22.; Waiser, "A Bear Garden: James Melville Macoun and the 1904 Peace River Controversy," *Canadian Historical Review* LXVII, 1 (1986), 42-61. Only the popular account by Dave Leonard and Victoria Lemieux provides a sense of the landscape. Although the text focuses upon agricultural appraisal, the book is filled with photographs of the landscape. See *A Fostered Dream: The Lure of the Peace River Country,* (Calgary: Detselig, 1991).

[8] Paul Voisey, *Vulcan*, Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl*, and Paula Nelson, *After the West was Won* all emphasise the culture of capitalism and accumulation of wealth in the settlement experience.

The image of the region, consequently, begins with the peculiarities of the landscape itself. The Peace River and its tributaries form the single most important feature of the landscape. During the exploration period, the rivers formed the transportation corridor and exploratory expeditions travelled through the region along the Peace River. The river valleys in the Peace country are deeply incised, often 600 to 800 feet below the plateau. These valleys have advantages and disadvantages for the countryside. They provide good drainage, but slumping and erosion made the land at the edge of the valley unsuitable for farming. The depth of valleys, furthermore, lowered the water table making wells impossible for small farms and forcing settlers to rely upon sloughs and dug-outs.[9] The steep grades along the valley slopes, and the loose shifting nature of the hillsides also represented a hindrance to land transportation.

The landscape on the plateaux above the rivers must also be considered. Although geologically the Peace country is related to the plains area of Alberta, in botanical terms it is primarily a parkland, boreal forest transition zone.[10] Aspen and willow stands interspersed with spruce and small long-grass prairies dominated the Peace River country landscape prior to settlement. George M. Dawson wrote that no extensive treeless plain existed in Canada north of the North Saskatchewan River, "and although prairies of a very attractive nature are found near the Peace River, they are limited in area and isolated by belts of woodland."[11] The Peace region thus consists of a series of prairies and parkland with a modest undulation associated with the ponding of glacial lake Peace as the ice fields retreated north-eastward. The drainage of this country, away from the river valleys, is poor and broad shallow lakes and sloughs are common. The prairies in the Peace River country were most likely created by fires set by Beaver and Cree Indians as a method of game control and harvesting.

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[9] Tracie, "Agricultural Settlement of the Peace," MA Thesis, 1967, 10.

[10] Tracie, "Agricultural Settlement," 6. R.L. Rutherford, *Geology and Water Resources in Parts of the Peace River and Grande Prairie Districts*, (Edmonton: Alberta Research Council Report 21, 1930). L.D. Cordes and D.J. Pennock, "Biophysical Constraints of the Natural Environment on Settlement," in *Environment and Economy: Essays on the Human Geography of Alberta*, B.M. Barr and P.J. Smith, eds., (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1984), 74-77.

The prairies are divided from each other by river valleys, hills, or heavy timber. In all, there are eight separate prairies in the Peace country, each acting as self-contained oasis.[12] In order of size, they are: the Grande Prairie, the southernmost of the prairies, stretching from the Little Smoky River in the east to the community of Rio Grande in the west; the Fairview-Berwyn prairie, a 40 kilometre wide band of open land spanning 70 kilometres along the north bank of the Peace River; the Fort Vermilion prairie, the northernmost of all the open lands, encompassing both sides of the Peace beyond the big bend in the river; the Pouce Coupé prairie, the most westerly of the open lands, lying south of the Peace in present-day British Columbia; the Spirit River prairie, in the heart of the Peace country, separated from the other prairies by large stands of timber, a series of rugged hills, and the Peace River valley itself; the Fort St. John prairie, north of the Peace River in British Columbia; the Little Prairie, Heart Prairie and Peavine Prairie, the eastern-most of the prairie lands, together stretch from Lesser Slave Lake to the present-day community of Falher; and finally, the Battle River prairie, on the western side of the Peace River north of the Fairview-Berwyn prairie. During the settlement era, an administrative and trade centre existed within each of these prairies, and at times, they found themselves completely isolated from one another. Rather than a monolithic prairie country deep in Canada's northern forests, the Peace country is therefore best understood as a series of isolated prairies sharing a common isolation from the related southern plains.

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[11] A.R.C. Selwyn and George M. Dawson, *Descriptive Sketch of the Physical Geography and Geology of the Dominion of Canada*, (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1884), 32.

[12] See Map 1. F.H. Kitto provided the best description of these different prairies, but he prepared his study after the beginning of the settlement period. His emphasis, therefore, was the settlements in each prairie rather than the prairie itself. See Kitto, *The Peace River District*, (Ottawa, Interior, 1918).

A series of natural boundaries help to define and isolate the Peace from other regions in Canada. The Rocky Mountains in the west, the Athabasca River watershed in the south and east, and the Canadian shield with its combination of rock and forest in the north-east all functioned as substantial barriers to anyone seeking the Peace River. None of these areas contained land which could be considered agricultural. The stark contrast between the landscape of these barriers and the Peace River country itself overwhelmed several of the early visitors. The sight of the river and the prairies following a long journey through territory which can only be described as rugged, helps to explain the positive image they created.[13]

The first European to write about the landscape of the Peace Country, and hence to create an image, was Sir Alexander Mackenzie. Beginning his journey to the Pacific, he entered the Peace River valley from the north in 1792. Mackenzie had travelled in the boreal forests of northern Canada, along the Mackenzie River to the arctic, and in the Red River basin of the southern prairies. Yet he responded emotionally, even romantically, to the Peace Country. R.D. Francis argues that perception is influenced by expectations. Visitors to the west thus "imposed their image on the region." The fur traders, he argues, sought furs rather than agriculture land, and consequently, they gave the west the image of "wasteland."[14] Mackenzie's comments upon the arrival of spring at the Forks on April 20, 1793 seem to contradict this vision of the fur trader's west. They indicate that the landscape of Peace River overpowered his senses and created a wild, garden image.

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[13] Both Tracie and Waiser hint at this perspective. Tracie, "A Poor Man's Land," 120; W.A. Waiser, *The Field Naturalist: John Macoun, the Geological Survey, and Natural Science*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 16-24.

[14] R.D. Francis, "From Wasteland to Utopia: Changing Images of the Canadian West in the Nineteenth Century," *Great Plains Quarterly* 7 (Summer 1987), 178-9.

> On the other side of the river, which was yet covered with ice, the plains were delightful; the trees were budding, and many plants in blossom. Mr. Mackay brought me a bunch of flowers of a pink colour, and a yellow button, encircled with six leaves of a light purple. The change in appearance of nature was as sudden as it was pleasing, for a few days only were passed away since the ground was covered with snow.[15]

On another occasion, Mackenzie again demonstrated how the beauty of the river and the landscape influenced perceptions.

> From the place which we quitted this morning, the West side of the river displayed a succession of the most beautiful scenery I had ever beheld. The ground rises at intervals to a considerable height and stretching inwards to a considerable distance: at every interval or pause in the rise, there is a very gently-ascending space or lawn, which is alternate with abrupt precipices to the summit of the whole, or, at least as far as the eye could distinguish. This magnificent theatre of nature has all the decorations which the trees and animals of the country can afford it: groves of poplars in every shape vary the scene; and their intervals are enlivened with vast herds of elks and buffaloes [sic]; the former choosing the steeps and uplands, and the latter preferring the plains. ...The whole country displayed an exuberant verdure; the trees that bear a blossom were advancing fast to that delightful appearance, and the velvet rind of their branches reflecting the oblique rays of rising or setting sun, added a splendid gaiety to the scene, which no expressions of mine are qualified to describe. The East side of the river consists of a range of high land covered with the white spruce and the soft birch, while the banks abound with the alder and the willow.[16]

This emotional response to the unexpected beauty of the Peace River and the surrounding countryside is a constant theme throughout the exploration period.

Mackenzie had entered the Peace Country from Lake Athabasca, and the stark contrast between the Canadian shield in the Athabasca country and the Peace must have had an impact. Other travellers entering the Peace from the north expressed similar awe. A century after Mackenzie, Warburton Pike described his encounter with Vermilion Chutes, the northern gateway to the Peace country. "The shute [sic] is not more than eight feet in height, but is of course a complete barrier to navigation. I think the scene from the south bank is one of the most beautiful in the whole course of the loveliest of rivers."[17] The subsequent journey up river would be interpreted from this existing framework. Nor could William Ogilvie hide his pleasure with the beauty of the river valley despite his dour disposition.

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[15] Lamb, ed., *The Journals of Mackenzie*, 256.

[16] Lamb, ed., *The Journals of Mackenzie*, 258-9.

> At Vermilion, [the banks] begin to gain in elevation, and at Battle River they are 500-700 feet high, and in many places a sharp straight descent [sic] to the water. One notable point a little below Cadots [sic] River rises from the water as steep as hardened sand and clay will lie, without a break, 523 feet. Again at a place known as "the ramparts" a few miles below the White Mud River, the river flows between sandstone cliffs which rise perpendicular 200-300 feet almost from the water, and behind these cliffs the wooded banks rise in broken masses to a height of fully 700 feet above the river. There is fine scenery here; and to one admiring such, a trip on this river from Vermillion [sic] to the Rocky Mountains in the autumn months would be interesting.[18]

None of these images suggest a utilitarian portrait of Eden, and were grounded instead in an emotional portrayal of aesthetic qualities.

Entering the Peace Country from the west could have a similar impact on the explorer. The Rocky Mountains, the western barrier, climax at around 51 degrees north latitude and then gradually decrease in elevation as they progress northward. Thus both the Peace and the Laird Rivers begin in the interior of British Columbia and breach the mountain barrier at a relatively low elevation. Explorers and adventurers, hence could enter the Peace region through Peace Pass. This pass is much lower in elevation than those to the south, but no less spectacular.[19] Even Paul Haworth, an American adventurer and explorer who wrote one of the most negative books on the Peace, was amazed by the Pass in 1915. "For thirty miles or so beyond Mount Selwyn the river flows right through the main chain of the Rockies, and the scenery on either hand is grand and gloomy beyond description. The peaks are extremely steep and ragged, and many of them rise a mile right up from the river.... I am convinced that in time the ride through this gorge will be widely known as one of the great scenic wonders of America.... Even after so many weeks of wandering among the mountains I was strongly impressed by the spectacle."[20]

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[17] Warburton Pike, *The Barren Ground of Northern Canada*, (London: Macmillan and Company, 1892), 220.

[18] William Ogilvie, "1884 Report," Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, Sessional Paper no. 13, *Sessional Papers, 1885*, 51.

[19] Selwyn and Dawson, *Descriptive Sketch*, 28.

Selwyn entered the region through this pass in 1875, and the exhilaration of crossing from the mountainous terrain of British Columbia on to the prairies of the Peace Country provided him with a thrilling introduction to the Peace region. The head of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) was not known for his romantic nature, but the plateau region above Fort St. John caught his attention. His utilitarian framework led to an agricultural assessment, but he could not divorce himself from the visual spectacle. "After rising 724 feet we came upon a fine level or slightly undulating country, covered with the richest herbage, of astonishing luxuriance; I have seen nothing in the Saskatchewan region that at all equals it -- both the soil and the climate here are better..."[21]

The expeditions entering the Peace region from the south encountered the Peace River for the first time at the Forks, the junction of the Heart, Smoky and Peace Rivers, at the location of the present town of Peace River. Like the scenery along the northern and western routes into the Peace, the visual spectacle at the Forks profoundly influenced the exploration parties. John Macoun first saw the Forks in 1872 in the company of Charles Horetzky. He later testified to a committee of Canada's Senate:

> When we reached the bank of the river we came upon it like as if we were walking across this room; there was no appearance of a river at all. The country was perfectly level and there was no appearance of the river until we came upon a steep bank -- we could see the country on the opposite side of the river. Seven hundred feet below us there wound a mighty river. I have never seen a river like it in any sense. You can picture to

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[20] Paul Haworth, *On the Headwaters of the Peace*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 257-8.

[21] A.R.C. Selwyn, "Report on Explorations in British Columbia," Geological Survey of Canada, *Report of Progress, 1875-6*, 51.

> yourself a river 800 yards wide, meandering through a narrow but very deep valley, because we were 700 feet above the water of the river. We could look to the left up the Smoky River and to the right to the sandstone cliffs, miles below us. That was September 1872.[22]

Macoun's exuberance may be written off as the work of an overly enthusiastic explorer. Indeed, he has been described in these terms by Waiser and Tracie.[23] His description of other regions in Western Canada -- his famous report on Palliser's Triangle or even more significantly his report on the Swan River region of Manitoba for example -- suggest that he was prone to exaggeration. Several other visitors to the Forks, however, were similarly affected.

Although an enthusiast in his own right, Charles Mair's experience in the Peace River country and his description of the Forks parallel Macoun's. After the trip from Lesser Slave Lake to Peace River Crossing along a trail he described as a "continuous mud-hole," Mair reached the Peace River valley.

> The view up the Peace River from the high prairie level is singularly beautiful, the river disclosing a series of reaches, like inland lakes, far to the west, whilst from the south comes the immense valley of the Heart, and, farther up, the Smoky River, a great tributary which drains a large extent of prairie country mixed with Timber. To the north spreads upwards, and backwards to its summit, the vast bank of the river, varied as to surface by rounded bare hills and valleys and flats sprinkled with aspens, cherries, and saskatoons, the latter loaded with ripe fruit.[24]

Mair crossed the River and

> [o]n the morning of the seventeenth [July] we topped the crest of the bank, and found ourselves at once in a magnificent prairie country, which swept northward varied by beautiful belts of timber, as far as Bear Lake [Lake Cardinal], to which we made a detour, then westerly to Old Wives Lake -- Nootooquay Sakaigon -- and on to our night camp at Burnt River,

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[22] Ernest Chambers, ed., *The Great Mackenzie Basin: Reports of the Select Standing Committees of the Senate, Sessions 1887 and 1888,* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1908), 68. (Hereafter cited as *Report of the Senate Committee 1888*)

[23] Waiser, *The Field Naturalist,* 16-24. Tracie, "Poor Man's Land," 120.

[24] Charles Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin: A Narrative of the Athabasca and Peace River Treaty Expedition of 1899*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), 81-2.

> twenty-two miles from Dunvegan. The great prairie is as flat as a table, and is the exact counterpart of Portage Plains in Manitoba, or a number of them, with the addition of belts and beautiful islands of timber, the soil being a loamy clay, unmistakeably fertile. Nothing could excel the beauty of this region, not even the fairest portions of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.[25]

Selwyn was also impressed by the Forks. His less enthusiastic description of the Forks may be explained by his approach from the west. After all, he had already encountered the prairies and the stunning river valley at Fort St. John. Still the Forks were a special place.

> From the top of the bank an almost level and well-grassed plain extends back about 250 yards to the base of a series of rounded, grassy hills, which at first rise steeply to 500-600 feet above the river, and then stretch away in a vast, rolling prairie, dotted with groves of spruce and poplar, and thickets of willow, service berry, wild cherry and other shrubs. These often surround swampy pools and lakelets, which occur in almost all the larger valleys and depressions, and teem with a variety of wild fowl, while, on the open hills and flats, prairie chicken are abundant. Looking across the river to the south and south-east, the general outline and elevation of the country does not differ from that on the north side, but in place of open, grassy hills and lightly wooded dells, a uniformly and apparently pretty thickly-wooded country extends on all sides as far as the eye can reach."[26]

Even Selwyn's utilitarian description provides some indication of the powerful impact the Forks had on explorers.

Besides the river itself, the large and small prairies of the Peace River region elicited a positive response. Mair wrote, "The Little Prairie, as it is called, is really a lovely region, in appearance resembling the Saskatchewan country ... here, too, we were charmed with a mirage of indescribable beauty, an enchanting portal to the mighty Peace..."[27] Similarly, Macoun expressed continued awe with the plateaux above the river. At Fort St. John he wrote, "For nine miles, the distance travelled, the whole country was covered with the most luxuriant vegetation. Clumps of willows and poplars of various ages were interspersed with the most astonishing growth of herbaceous plants I had ever witnessed....It would be folly to attempt to depict the appearance of the country, as it was so much beyond what I ever saw before that I dare hardly make use of truthful words to portray it."[28]

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[25] Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin*, 83-4.

[26] Selwyn, "Report," *Report of Progress, 1875-76*, 57.

[27] Charles Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin*, 82.

Even the less enthusiastic provide excellent descriptions of the beauty in the Peace country. For instance, George M. Dawson's portrait of the Grande Prairie.

> The surface of Grande Prairie is not monotonously undulating ... but may rather be characterized as forming a series of gently sloping ridges or swells between the various river streams and courses, which are here not found to cut deep gorge-like valleys. Much of the country is park-like with groves of poplar, while extensive tracts are quite open, or with coppice along the stream valleys only. Toward the edges the prairie very often blends almost imperceptibly with the woodland by the gradual increase and coalescence of the patches of poplar and willow.[29]

The Peace River and its prairies could not capture everyone. Despite his exuberant description of Peace Pass, Paul Haworth, found the plateaux and river valley to be less spectacular. "After one has seen a few miles of the scenery he has, to all intents and purposes, seen all of it, for it is monotonous alike."[30]

The utilitarian objectives of the expeditions must be considered in light of the emotion driven image of an Eden like wilderness. Canadian science in the 1870s, moreover, had yet to mature. Darwin's conception of an adaptive natural world had no support in the Canadian scientific community in the 1870s.[31] God created and shaped the natural world. Scientists explored it in practical rather than abstract terms. The geologist or botanist collected and catalogued the wonder of God's world. In this scientific methodology, observation and imagery had a more powerful impact than may be at first thought the case. The emotional impressions fostered by the landscape helped define the utilitarian image of the Peace studied by Zaslow, Tracie and Waiser.

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[28] Macoun, "Report on Botanical Features of the Country Traversed from Vancouver Island to Carleton, on the Saskatchewan," GSC *Report of Progress, 1875-6*, 154.

[29] George M. Dawson, "Report on Explorations from Port Simpson on the Pacific to Edmonton on the Saskatchewan," GSC *Report on Progress, 1879-80*, 53B.

[30] Paul Haworth, *On the Headwaters of the Peace*, 288.

[31] A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, (Montreal: McGill Queens, 1979), 99-134; Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 59-78; Carl Berger, *Science God and Nature*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) 59-78; and W.A. Waiser, *The Field Naturalist*, 3-15.

All early exploration in the Peace River region occurred within a utilitarian framework. Fur traders sought valuable fur lands and post locations, and railway surveyors located viable railway routes, possible agricultural lands, and merchantable timber stands. Similarly, members of the Geological Survey of Canada searched for resources useful to the eastern metropolitan community. In other words, they created images and perceptions for the potential European settler and the metropolitan promoter. Because of this role, the Canadian scientific community, like its American counterpart, should not be divorced from its societal environment. Richard White points out that explorers were "agents of science who thought themselves the tools of progress."[32] The search for pure knowledge had been replaced by the search for usable knowledge. By the 1850s, the scientist as agent of progress was fully developed, and the science of exploration in the United States served political and developmental interests. Scientists depended upon government and corporate sponsorship for their expeditions. In return, they sought information which could be used by their patrons. Mineral wealth, railway grades, agricultural possibilities and other utilitarian topics dominated their reports. The railway surveys and the search for a trans-continental route soon became the binding link.[33]

The relationship between the explorers and native people illustrates the new orientation. Although the local native population had been a valuable source of information for fur traders, the railway explorers and scientists stopped learning about the new environment from the native community. Instead they chose only to learn about native people. The people were no longer a source of information, but an object of study. Native people became a part of the environment.[34] The reports on the Peace River country reflect this process. Native people and their perspectives are alarmingly absent from all these reports. They acted as guides for the explorers, and when the expeditions left the river they often followed native hunting trails. Yet little information was obtained from these people. The lack of contact, combined with the explorer as instrument of progress, helps explain this practice. The Beaver and Cree had divided interests in the River basin by the time of exploration. The Beaver dominated the region above Dunvegan, and the Cree from the Edmonton district dominated the area below. The Beaver Indians did not have a high regard for Europeans even in the fur trade period, and their language was relatively unknown. Native people encountered by Dawson and Selwyn, for example, often fled into the forest rather than meet the explorers.[35] The Cree, Selwyn noted, primarily came to the area to pick berries.[36] Under these circumstances, the explorers may have considered native information to be of little value.

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[32] White, *A New History of the American West,* 119.

[33] White, *New History of the American West*, 126-35.

Another, perhaps more important, reason for the lack of a native perspective could be the inability of the explorers to reconcile the image they sought to create and the conditions of native life. The absolute poverty experienced by the Beaver and the Cree as the fur trade retreated helped to explain this issue. How could you explain the destitution of the native people in a countryside so potentially plentiful? Macoun blamed the native starvation on the hunting and gathering system and complained that the HBC had adopted the native practice rather than agriculture.[37] Reverend Brick from the Anglican Mission at Shaftesbury made a similar observation regarding the starvation of the native people. A lack of big game, a rabbit shortage, and measles were responsible for the native's plight.[38] Since traditional Cree and Beaver lifestyles obviously could not provide a prosperous life, little could be learned from them.

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[34] White, *A New History of the American West*, 133.

[35] Dawson, "1879 Report," 49B-51B. Excerpt in Bowes, 131.

[36] Selwyn, "Report," *Report of Progress, 1875-76*, 56-60. Dawson made a similar comment. Dawson, "1879 Report," 53B.

[37] Macoun, "Report," *Report of Progress, 1875-6*, 158.

In Canada, the relationship between exploration and political developmental issues came to light during the expansionist era in the famous 1857 and 1858 expeditions led by Henry Youle Hind.[39] It is not a surprise then, that the first major Canadian exploratory surveys of the Peace River country had distinctly utilitarian objectives and exemplified the link between science, government and developers. They occurred under the combined auspices of the Canadian Pacific Railway surveys and the Geological Survey of Canada in the 1870s. The Geological Survey of Canada, as the Canadian governmental agent, sought a route for the railway through a potentially valuable territory. This relationship between the GSC and the objectives of the nation strengthened in 1877 when the GSC became an official branch of the Department of the Interior rather than a semi-autonomous agency which worked for the government on contract.[40] Because the Dominion government accepted the expansionist vision of the North-West as a future agricultural region, the GSC had to provide the practical information necessary to fulfill this vision.[41] Hence the search for resources useful to the metropolis and the future railway influenced their reports. Soils, minerals (especially coal), timber, and climate became the key areas of interest.[42]

The suitability of the Peace country for agriculture was the most important aspect of the exploration in the 1870s. Sandford Fleming sent the first expedition into the Peace River country to explore the viability of the Peace River Pass for a trans-continental railway.[43] Although the pass had served as a primary route into British Columbia for the Hudson's Bay Company and the first crop of barley grown in the Peace country dated from Daniel Harmon's plot at Dunvegan in 1809,[44] little knowledge about the climate or soils in the Peace River country existed. The possibilities for agricultural traffic along the route, therefore, became a primary concern for Horetzky and Macoun. Macoun's accidental engagement by Fleming for the expedition can be related precisely to this issue.[45]

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[38] *Report of the Senate Committee, 1888,* 195.

[39] Warkentin, "Steppe, Desert and Empire," 116-21; Owram *Promise of Eden*, 64-5, 71-4.

[40] Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada,* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1975), 123-5.

[41] Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 64-5, and Warkentin, "The Desert Goes North," in *Images of the Plains*, 151-7.

[42] Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 17-19; *idem*, *Reading the Rocks*, 108.

Like the 1872 Canadian Pacific expedition, the subsequent investigation of the Peace River country in 1875 had utilitarian objectives. The GSC work continued in support of the railway project. Furthermore, by the time Selwyn and Macoun traversed the Peace River Country for the GSC, both had become boosters of the Peace region. Selwyn had been convinced by his 1871 trip along the Thompson route that the British Columbia interior was the future source of that province's wealth. Macoun was convinced about the bounties of the Peace country as a result of his 1872 journey. Thus two men who needed merely to confirm rather than to formulate their viewpoints conducted the first significant official government survey of the Peace Country.[46]

After his two journeys, Macoun became the primary spokesperson for the agricultural possibilities of the Peace River country. He had visited the region twice and was the only member of either expedition with a background in botany. He entered the Peace country through both the Athabasca watershed and the Rocky Mountains, and the emotional response so apparent in his description of the landscape influenced his reports.

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[43] The Peace Pass had been brought to Fleming's attention by the 1872 publication Archibald Macleod, "Peace River: A Canoe Voyage from Fort Chipewyan to the Pacific with George Simpson in 1828" (London, 1872). See A. Birrell, "Charles Horetzky: Fortunes of a Misfit," *Alberta Historical Review* 19 (Winter 1971), 11.

[44] Daniel Williams Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America,* Introduction by W.L. Grant, (Toronto: Courier Press, 1911, first published in 1820), 147-8.

[45] Waiser, *The Field Naturalist*, 17-9.

[46] Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks*, 108-10.

In many respects, his observations were less a scientific study than an attempt to explain what he saw. Macoun lacked any formal scientific training, and had developed his reputation as a botanist entirely through his skills as a collector. While his scientific technique resembled other botanists of the period, Waiser points out that "the simple test became the only test," and hence, he was prone to "[d]aring assumptions and bold generalisations."[47] With no systematic information available, Macoun still concluded that the climate in the Peace made successful agriculture more likely than expected.

At Hudson Hope, he attempted to explain the vegetable gardens he encountered, and created scientific explanation as he proceeded. "Growth is extremely rapid, owing in part to the length of day and cloudless skies supplemented by heavy dews, and possibly also in part to the great range of temperatures during the twenty-four hours, from about 45 degrees at sunrise to 80 degrees Fahr. at noon." Cool nights he concluded, made plants grow faster during the heat of the day. Similarly, at Vermilion, "I first examined the field and garden, and found with the utmost astonishment that, although more than two degrees further north than Dunvegan or St. John, the barley and vegetables were much further advanced." Amazed that agriculture could be conducted at such northern latitudes, Macoun concluded that the longer daylight period during the northern summer explained the phenomenon.[48]

By the end of his second visit to the Peace River country, Macoun believed he had a responsibility to explain God's bounty to the people. He became convinced that Canada's future lay in a northern empire anchored along the North Saskatchewan River with Churchill serving as a Canadian Archangel.[49]

> Writing here at Chipewyan in the centre of the Wild North Land ... the vastness seems to overpower the mind and cause that benumbing feeling which we are prone to feel when in the presence of something we cannot grasp ... the soil wherever tried throughout the whole extent of this vast

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[47] Waiser, *The Field Naturalist*, 20.

[48] Macoun, "Report," *Report of Progress, 1875-76*: 152-3, 160.

[49] Macoun, *Manitoba and the Great North-West*, (Guelph: The World Publishing Company), 618-21.

> region gives enormous return for little labour, giving promise of the day when the land will be filled with a busy multitude...[50]

Consequently, he willingly exaggerated conditions beyond even his own observations. Despite his observations that agriculture at Fort St. John was confined to the river valley, he concluded that agriculture on the plateau was practical since the soil was better, and the vegetation and berries less than a week behind those in the valley. He reached similar conclusions about the Battle River prairie despite his inability to conduct scientific observations at that point.[51]

Macoun's ideas were not widely accepted following the two expeditions.[52] The image of the Peace as an agricultural zone of tremendous potential may never have materialised based upon his work alone. Other explorers and scientists, however, shared his convictions. The head of the GSC, A.R.C. Selwyn, reached similar conclusions, noting wheat would provide an excellent crop when it reached Hudson Hope. "I consider it a region far fitter for settlement than much of the Saskatchewan country," he wrote.[53] More importantly, the 1879 trip into the Peace country by G.M. Dawson resulted in a strong endorsement of the area.

The 1879 expedition through Pine Pass and into the southern portions of the Peace country was also conducted in support of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Led by Dr. George M. Dawson, with assistance from R.G. McConnell and H. Cambie, the primary object of the trip was the search for coal and an alternative trans-continental route for the railway.[54] In comparison to Macoun, George M. Dawson had an outstanding reputation as a scientist. His thorough work on the southern prairies avoided grandiose claims about the landscape, climate, or soils.[55] Dawson's report, while it contained several references to the landscape's beauty, focused on the agricultural potential of the Peace River region. "While regretting that the data at the disposal for the determination of the agricultural value of the Peace River country are not fuller," he wrote, "we may, I believe, arrive with considerable certainty at the general fact that it is great."[56]

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[50] Quoted in Waiser, *The Field Naturalist*, 30.

[51] Macoun, "Report" *Report of Progress, 1875-6*, 155-8.

[52] This information helps to explain why Macoun relied heavily upon Dawson's 1879 report rather than his own work when he published *Manitoba and the Great North-West*.

[53] Selwyn, "Report" *Report of Progress, 1875-6*, 48. Excerpt in Bowes, 119-24.

[54] Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks*, 114. Dawson, "Report," *Report of Progress, 1879-80*, 1B.

The suitability of the climate, given the northern latitude of the Peace River region, became the most important element of the debate. The immature science of the 1870s understood little about the climate. The publication of Lorin Blodgett's *The Climatology of the United States and Temperate Latitudes of the North American Continent* in 1857 had, for the first time, suggested that relationship between climate and latitude need not be considered explicit. His maps of the North American climate utilising isothermal lines suggested that the interior of the continent was much warmer than a comparable eastern Canadian latitude.[57] Although Owram, Warkentin and Dunbar suggest that certain Canadian explorers were aware of Blodgett's theories, the weakness of his Canadian evidence limited the usefulness of the work.[58] In the scientific studies of the Peace Country, the only references to Blodgett appear in Macoun's reports and his book *Manitoba and the Great Northwest* (1882). Yet Macoun, instead of experimenting with Blodgett's theory, used it to rationalise his own notions regarding the Peace Country.[59]

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[55] Waiser, *The Field Naturalist*, 34; and Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks*.

[56] Dawson, "Report" *Report of Progress, 1879-80*, 78B-79B. Excerpt including the quote in Bowes, 131-2.

[57] G.S. Dunbar, "Isotherms and Politics: Perception of the Northwest in the 1850s," in *Prairie Perspectives 2*, 80-102.

[58] Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 66-7; Warkentin, "Steppe, Desert and Empire," 132-3; and Dunbar, 89.

[59] Macoun, "Report," GSC *Report of Progress, 1875-6*, 110-232; *idem*, *Manitoba and the Great Northwest*, 144-8; and Waiser, *The Field Naturalist*, 32-3. In his explanation for the warm Peace River climate, George Dawson made reference to the Chinook winds rather than Blodgett. Dawson, "Report," GSC *Report of Progress, 1879-80*, 76B-77B.

The majority of the information on climate, consequently, came from observation of typical plant life. Looking over the lush vegetation in the Peace region, Macoun convinced himself that summer temperatures were more important than the mean temperature.[60] He also expressed enthusiasm for the belief that settlement would reduce summer frosts.[61] Selwyn's observations on climate were also risky. He reported that during 1875, the only summer frosts occurred 25 and 26 September. His examination of the HBC records 1865-75 led him to compare the Peace River climate favourably with Montreal.[62] Dawson's report must be considered in light of these aspects. He avoided the exaggeration so pronounced in Macoun's work, but still concluded that the summer climate in the Peace Country did not differ from that of the fertile belt to the south, and the winter was less severe. Although early and late frosts may thus have been a problem, they were usually "local" in character, and the experience in the North Saskatchewan country suggested that agriculture would succeed. Like Macoun, Dawson also underscored the importance of the long northern day. The long hours of sunlight would, he argued, take "the place to a certain extent of heat."[63]

Carl Tracie has demonstrated that another controversy over the climate eventually developed. The difference in elevation between the valley bottom -- the location of all the early farms -- and the surrounding plateaux added another variable to the discussion. Yet in the 1870s, no controversy existed. Macoun noticed that the plateau growing season seemed shorter, but gave no indication as to its importance. Charles Horetzky even argued that the vegetation on the plateau did not suffer from frost like that in the valley, and concluded that agriculture on the plateau would be better than that in the valley. Dawson reached similar conclusions.[64] Only in the 1880s did anyone question the Peace country climate.

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[60] Macoun, "Report," in Sandford Fleming *CPR Report of Progress to 1874*, 65-7.

[61] Macoun in Sandford Fleming, *Report of Progress on the Explorations and Surveys up to January, 1874*, (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger and Co., 1874), 95.

[62] Selwyn, "Report on Exploration in British Columbia in 1875," GSC, *Report of Progress, 1875-76*, 83-5.

[63] Dawson, "Report," GSC *Report, 1879-80*, 72B-73B, 78B. Excerpt in Bowes, 132.

One lone scientific voice in the 1880s expressed caution. William Ogilvie, a Dominion Lands surveyor, explored the region on behalf of the Department of the Interior in 1884. His lack of involvement with the GSC or the CPR made him a unique voice in the early exploration of Peace River. Frost hurt all the crops at the small HBC and mission plots in 1884, hence, the problems of summer frost attracted his attention. Although the area could produce wonderful bumper crops in some years, "uncertainty" existed every year. One long time resident told Ogilvie that in each seven-year period, a farmer could expect two excellent years, two poor years, and three fair years.[65] Most importantly, the risk of failure was even greater on the plateau. The crops at Dunvegan were good "notwithstanding the severity of the frosts," but "[t]he only settler in all the Peace River country who lives beyond the immediate valley of the river ... lost all his crops by frosts."[66]

Despite the active role played by the CPR exploration parties, the railway had been built along a southern route. The Peace country, therefore, ceased to be a primary object of study for the GSC. Furthermore, since the railway no longer acted as the primary catalyst for investigations, few positive scientific studies appeared during the next 30 years. This lack of new research gave added importance to a Select Senate Committee inquiry into Canada's Northland in 1887 and 1888.[67] Under the direction of Senator John Christian Schultz, the Senate Committee gathered all of the information gained in the 1870s and 1880s. The Senate Committee heard testimony from the scientists and the district's residents and boosters. The Senators set out to explore the value of Canada's north to the nation. As such, they were not interested in negative information. They firmly entrenched a positive image upon the Peace country.

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[64] Horetzky, *Canada on the Pacific*, 44. Dawson, "Report," GSC *Report of Progress, 1879-80*, 72B. Tracie's controversy occurred much later following the publication of James Macoun's 1904 Report. "Poor Man's Land," 116-7.

[65] Ogilvie, "1884 Report," 53-4.

[66] *Ibid.*, 55.

[67] Zaslow dated the Canadian fascination with the Peace Country from this 1888 Senate Committee. Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 7. See Canada, Senate, *Debates 1888*, 215-40.

The governmental representatives actively promoted a positive image. At the 1888 Senate Committee hearings, Dawson reduced several of the negative images which existed. For example, he pointed out that although William Ogilvie's 1884 report on agricultural possibilities appeared negative, the report also contained several positive positions. He emphasised Ogilvie's position that: "it appears therefore that from Dunvegan, on the north side of Peace River down to Peace Point, and thence to Salt River on Great Slave Lake, there is a tract of country about 600 miles in length and forty miles wide, of which a large percentage is fit for immediate settlement, and a great deal more could easily be cleared."[68] The Committee heard similar testimony from another positive scientific voice, John Macoun.[69]

The few local residents who presented at the Senate Committee merely confirmed the scientific presentations. The testimony of Reverend Gough Brick was typical. Brick told the Senators about the crops of wheat, oats, barley, potatoes and turnips he had grown at the Shaftesbury mission, and of his experiments with crops on the plateau above the valley. Although summer frosts occasionally visited the country, in his opinion they were "still not as destructive in the Peace River country as further south." He concluded that the Peace country had "the finest climate in the world."[70]

By 1888, consequently, the Peace River country's image as a potential agricultural region had been created. In the years which followed, the city of Edmonton and its boosters took over from the CPR in promotion of the Peace country. They cultivated the garden image. During the 1880s, as the CPR bypassed the town for a southern route, the fur trade remained the major enterprise of the community. Northern railways and the possibility of further northern development linked to Edmonton were the major source of optimism. Railways like the Saskatchewan and Northwestern (1883), North-Western Railway of Canada (1888), and Assiniboia, Edmonton and Unjigah Railway (1889), were promoted and emphasised in the local press.[71] The town seemed to link its future to the development of the north.

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[68] G.M Dawson's testimony to the Senate Committee in *Report of the Senate Committee, 1888*, 215. The quote is from Ogilvie, "1884 Report," 54.

[69] *Report of the Senate Committee, 1888,* 71 and 230.

[70] *Report of the Senate Committee, 1888,* 194.

The scientific studies which followed the Senate Committee all seemed to challenge the existing image of the Peace region. William Ogilvie again visited the region for the Dominion Lands Branch. In 1891, he reported on agriculture as far north as the Laird River valley and wrote that at Fort St. John "[t]he soil is an excellent black clay loam as rich as any I ever saw, and the growth of hay and grass bears testimony to this fact." He also reported no evidence of frost in October of that year.[72] Yet his report is filled with pessimism. He argued that frost could be expected in August on the plateau and that stock raising was the best agricultural prospect for the region. "I regret that I have to present such an unfavourable account of a region of which so much has been said and written."[73]

Anyone searching for information of the Peace Country, however, was bound to be confused by the writers. In 1892, American Geologist Warburton Pike called for caution. He pointed out that while the Lawrence farm at Vermilion and the Brick mission at Shaftesbury appeared successful, "for many years to come there is not the slightest reason for that emigration of farmers to Peace River which wild enthusiasts clamour for." Pike explained that both of these farms were in the valley where land was limited.

> Climb the steep banks and take a glance over the millions of fertile acres which the philanthropic politician wishes to see cultivated; notice the frost on a summer's morning, and make the attempt, as has often been made already, to raise a crop on this elevated plateau. In ten years time this

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[71] Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 32.

[72] William Ogilvie, *Report on Peace River and Tributaries in 1891*, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1892), 30-31.

[73] *Ibid.*, 32. Excerpt in Bowes, 175-82.

> may be a cattle-country, although hay swamps are insufficient to ensure enough feed for the long winter; but let us have an end of this talk of sending poor settlers to starve in a land unable to supply food to the Indian.[74]

Despite his pessimism, Pike was thrilled by the sight of the Fort Vermilion region, and left the reader with an impression difficult to reconcile with his objections to settlement.

> We reached Vermillion [sic] late in September, in the full glory of the autumn; the sharp morning frosts had coloured the poplar leaves with the brightest golden tints, and the blue haze of an Indian summer hung over prairie and wood. Away on Great Slave Lake a half-breed had told me of the beauties of Vermillion [sic] as a farming country, and had explained that all the good things of the world grew there freely, so that I was prepared for the sight of wheat and barley fields, which had this year produced a more abundant harvest than usual; potatoes and other vegetables were growing luxuriantly, cattle and horses were fattening on the rich prairie grass, and it seemed there was little to be gained by leaving such a fertile spot in the face of the winter that would soon be upon us.[75]

A similar problem existed in the writings by Charles Mair. He commented quite favourably and he argued agriculture would succeed, but he had no evidence and several contradictory reports from Métis.[76] Adventurer Somers Somerset had no problem making up his mind. Visiting the country during the summer of 1893 he called the area "a haunted land" and concluded it was unfit for agrarian settlement.[77] The contradictory reports made it difficult for a potential settler to determine the quality of this region.

The Klondike gold rush certainly increased awareness of the Peace Country, but its impact has been overstated.[78] The Peace River region certainly received attention in the House of Commons, and in the Edmonton newspapers during the Klondike rush, but little activity of any significance followed the Klondike period. The small number of Klondikers who settled in the Peace -- among them one of the most famous Peace River Pioneers, Alex Monkman -- had little impact on the overall pattern of development. The image of the Peace Country remained unchanged by the event. The Klondike rush, nevertheless, restored the interest of railway promoters in the Peace region. The garden image certainly existed in their minds. By 1903 several transcontinental projects and even more local lines had been chartered or requested charters to build via the Peace Country. They included: the Trans-Canada Railway; the Canada Central Railway; the Pacific, Northern and Omineca Railway; and the Edmonton and Peace River Railway.[79] When the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern began to consider possible routes to the Pacific, they encouraged another scientific investigation. James Macoun, the son of John Macoun and a botanist in the GSC, entered the region in 1903 and mounted a significant challenge to the image created by the Schultz Committee.

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[74] Warburton Pike, *The Barren Grounds*, 223-4. Excerpt in Bowes, 183-5.

[75] Pike, *The Barren Ground*, 221-2.

[76] Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin*, 90, 92-3. Mair, for example, never visited Keg River prairie, but concluded that it was "a good farming country" after learning about its existence.

[77] H. Somers Somerset, *The Land of Muskeg*, (London: William Heineman, 1895), 93-6.

James Macoun travelled throughout the Peace country. He visited all of the major prairies, and made an effort to interview the residents of the region. Unlike several earlier explorers, James Macoun made an effort to record daily minimum temperatures to determine the probability of summer frost, and examined both the vegetation and soils. Like William Ogilvie's 1884 journey, his three-month stay in the Peace River country unfortunately coincided with one of the Peace Country's periodic cold, wet summers. His report would reflect the "rather bleak mental picture" his experiences led him to form.[80]

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[78] Zaslow calls the Klondike rush instrumental to northern development. He points to the increased interest of railway promoters at the turn of the Century as evidence for his claim. The two new transcontinental projects, however, were probably more important in this regard. Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 39-41, 70.

[79] Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 104-6.

[80] W.A. Waiser, "A Bear Garden," 48-9.

James Macoun began his report with a famous observation that "nearly all the reports on the climate of the Peace River country and the fertility of the soil have been based on observations made in the valley."[81] His observations and his interviews led him to believe conditions on the plateau were not nearly as favourable. Summer frosts would be a constant threat, and neither increased cultivation nor drainage of swamps, two theories often promoted in the scientific community, would reduce that threat. A grain culture in the Peace River country could not be considered until new and hardier varieties of grain existed. His report stunningly denounced the garden image. "I have been forced to the conclusion that, notwithstanding the luxuriant growth that is to be seen almost everywhere, the upper Peace river country ... will never be a country in which wheat can be grown successfully."[82]

Carl Tracie points out that the government promotional literature embellished conditions by using atypical experiences, and utilising the opinions of explorers selectively. As a result, they ignored climatic hazards, and overstated the extent of the grasslands.[83] This activity coincided with a campaign to soften the winter image of the southern prairies.[84] Given the government's unwillingness to promote any of the negative information obtained earlier, the publication of James Macoun's negative report is surprising. It is partially explained by the independence Robert Bell gave to his field officers during his tenure.[85] Whatever the reason for its publication, James Macoun's report had to be countered.

Macoun's negative image caused the Liberal M.P. for Edmonton, Frank Oliver, to react with vehemence. Oliver, the editor of the Edmonton *Bulletin* and a prominent

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[81] James Macoun, *Report on the Peace River Region*, (Ottawa: 1904), 5.

[82] James Macoun, *Report*, 39. Excerpt in Bowes, 212.

[83] Carl Tracie, "Farm Location in the Peace," PhD Thesis, University of Alberta, 1970, 18-19.

[84] Ronald Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 14-8.

[85] Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks*, 211.

Edmonton booster, had plans for the Peace River country. He had recently written to the Minister of the Interior requesting improved trails between Edmonton and the Peace River region because "the sooner people can get into the country the better it will be for the Railway when built, and the greater the justification for the policy of building it."[86] At the House of Commons Select Standing Committee on Agriculture hearings, Oliver denounced the younger Macoun.[87] He also conducted a smear campaign in the pages of the *Bulletin*.[88] In the end, the Standing Committee on Agriculture joined with Oliver in denouncing the report. They concluded that James Macoun's report was based on insufficient data and objected to his sweeping conclusions.[89] Ironically, the end result of James Macoun's negative portrait of the Peace country was not the creation of a new image, but the improvement of the old garden image.

The reception which greeted James Macoun's report led to new government activity in the Peace country. Under the terms of the CPR railway agreement with British Columbia, the Dominion government administered 3.5 million acres of the Peace River country within the boundaries of that province. J.A. Macdonnell was sent to the Peace Country to explore the so-called Peace River Block. His report, although not as positive as the work of the 1870s, restored some of the garden image to the Peace region. For the first time a government sponsored expedition stayed in the region for more than a few months as Macdonnell spent the winter of 1905-6 in the Fort St. John region. He cultivated a garden plot and oats field at Fort St. John, and both had matured prior to the first frost, September 5, and a killing frost September 15.[90] Ranching, he reported would definitely succeed, and other agricultural possibilities existed. The rich fertile soil was evenly distributed throughout the area.

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[86] Oliver to Sifton, March 30, 1904. Quoted in Waiser, "A Bear Garden," 52.

[87] Canada. *House of Commons Journals* 1904, Appendix 2, "Report of the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization."

[88] *Bulletin*, April 6, April 8, April 12, and April 22, 1904.

[89] Waiser, "A Bear Garden," provides an excellent discussion of all the political manifestations which eventually led to this politically correct conclusion.

[90] J.A. Macdonnell, "Exploratory Survey of Peace River," Sessional Paper no. 178, *Sessional Papers, XLI, no. 13, 1906-7.*

The most important activity regarding the Peace country occurred in the Senate once again. The 1907 Select Senate Committee really added little in the way of new evidence. Its purpose could be defined as getting all the positive information into public circulation. Most of the witnesses called by the 1907 Senate Committee had a vested interest in development of the North.[91] Those called to report on the Peace Country included James Cornwall and W.F. Bredin, two long term residents of Northern Alberta whose transportation and commercial operations would benefit from northern settlement. Fred Lawrence, the successful Fort Vermilion farmer, represented the agricultural interests in the region. The only two government representatives to testify on the Peace Country were R.G. McConnell, a member of G.M. Dawson's 1879 expedition and Henry Conroy, the Treaty 8 inspector.

At the 1907 Senate hearings, R.G. McConnell was a sober voice. He reserved his greatest praise for the land near Fort Vermilion. "That country," he stated, "is too good to be wasted." In the rest of his evidence, however, he exhibited the lack of enthusiasm and caution which characterised Dawson's report. The risk of August frosts in all other locations made wheat farming difficult, he noted, and some of the land designated agricultural on maps of the area contained muskegs and he[illegible]mber stands. Agriculture he concluded was possible, but dangerous.[92]

Henry Conroy was called upon to discredit James Macoun's report, an interesting choice probably related to John Macoun's prominent role as a critic of his son during the Standing Committee on Agriculture hearings.[93]

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[91] Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 155.

[92] Chambers, *Canada's Fertile Northland: Evidence Heard before a Select Committee of the Senate of Canada, 1906-7*, (Ottawa: Government Print Bureau, 1907), 52-3.

[93] Waiser, "A Bear Garden," 51. Macoun had recounted his original 1875 conclusions during the 1904 Agriculture Committee hearings, but had proved unwilling to attack his son as a scientist.

> He did not have proper knowledge. I was through that same country that spring, and it happened to be a wet spring. The farmer he speaks of had not a grain in up to May 20. That I can swear to. In fact he could not have put it in before June 6. That is the year it froze, and it has never frozen since. Old timers in there do not want anybody to come in, and they tell people that the country is no good.[94]

W.F. Bredin agreed with Conroy. He had grown oats himself at Grande Prairie, as had several other successful farmers. He estimated the available agricultural land in the region at 100,000,000 acres.[95] Fred Lawrence from Fort Vermilion gave similar evidence claiming to have never experienced a total crop failure in 20 years. He even reduced the problem of muskeg, claiming that when fire cleared the timber from a muskeg, prairie grass took control. In other words, clearing forest would reduce muskeg.[96] The Senate Committee accepted Bredin over McConnell on the scale of agricultural lands claiming as much land existed in the Peace as in all the rest of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.[97]

Predictably, the 1907 Senate Report was extraordinarily positive. The soils were rich; the open prairies large. The length of the day compensated for the short summer growing season, and the chinook winds near mountains made the winter feeding season short (6-7 wks.) and seeding early. Invariably crops could be seeded at Fort St. John in April, sometimes in March.[98] Under these conditions, the normal fall frost at the beginning of September posed no problems. Crops had matured to a stage where frost became a nuisance rather than a threat. Agriculture would succeed in the Peace country.

Frank Oliver, nevertheless, took it upon himself to increase the promotion of the Peace River country. The positive nature of the 1888 Senate report won his support when he became Minister of the Interior in 1905. He authorised a reprint and redistribution of the findings of the Schultz commission in conjunction with the 1907 Senate report. His actions combined with the republication of a twenty-year-old report demonstrated that little new, acceptable scientific evidence had been discovered. Its sole purpose was to counter the negative publicity created by James Macoun's 1904 report.[99]

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[94] *Canada's Fertile Northland*, 74.

[95] *Canada's Fertile Northland*, 98.

[96] *Canada's Fertile Northland*, 103-4.

[97] *Canada's Fertile Northland*, 7.

[98] *Canada's Fertile Northland*, 7-8.

Despite the enthusiasm of the 1907 Senate Commission Report, and Oliver's crusade against James Macoun's negative vision of the Peace country, the railway companies, the key to future development, obtained a different picture of the countryside. L.B. Boyd led an expedition into the Peace region for the Canadian Northern. The Railway company desired an assessment of the timber and agricultural resources of the area. His September 1908 report could not be classed as a glowing recommendation. He concluded that the notoriety of the Peace country was based upon the crop conditions in the Valley near Peace Crossing. This area contained only 3000 acres. Agriculture on the plateau above the river was risky due to frost and the numerous failed farmsteads were evidence of the problem. Stock raising could be conducted profitably, but grain growing should not be considered. His assessment of the timber supply was equally disillusioning for the Canadian Northern.[100]

Nothing could stop the process of restoring the image of the Peace country, however. The government literature during the settlement period utilised all the positive material from the previous thirty years. The Department of the Interior's 1916 pamphlet on the Peace Country cited John Macoun, Charles Horetzky, A.R.C. Selwyn, R.G. McConnell, George M. Dawson, William Ogilvie (selectively), Fred Lawrence, and W.F. Bredin. Almost no negative information was provided -- a single line from H.J. Cambie's 1880 report regarding a crop destroyed by frost stands as a lone example -- and James Macoun's report was never mentioned. The pamphlet utilised John Macoun's enthusiastic 1888 testimony to the Senate Committee to calm any fears about the northern climate. "The vegetation throughout the whole Peace river valley is of the most luxuriant character," it noted, "and it seems *More Like that of the Tropics* than a country drawing near the Arctic Circle." Indeed, the pamphlet concluded that all areas of the prairies except the Red River Valley had as great a risk of frost as the Peace region.[101] The Department's pamphlets which followed in subsequent years continued in this tradition. The plateaux above Dunvegan "represent some of the finest wheat growing sections of the world." A similar claim was made for the 2000 square miles in the Grande Prairie.[102]

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[99] Ernest J. Chambers, ed., *The Great Mackenzie Basin*. For Oliver's viewpoint on James Macoun's report see W.A. Waiser, "A Bear Garden."

[100] NAC, Canadian National Railway Papers, RG 30, vol. 7377, envelope 2, Report of L.B. Boyd's Expedition, September 1908.

Negative reports continued after 1907, but they were limited in number and had little official government support. Paul Haworth, for instance, was an adventurer with no scientific training. In his book published in 1917, he doubted that anything but the valley could be utilised for grain growing. Haworth believed settlement would occur -- it had occurred in Greenland and Iceland after all -- but "at present the country is a land for strong men who wish to "rough it" rather than for settlers with families.[103] But Haworth was a lone voice of negativism in the new chorus of positive information on the Peace River region.

Boosters, promoters, and speculators now took control of the image of the Peace Country. Numerous pamphlets and booklets about the Peace appeared in the period 1907-18, the first settlement period. Each demonstrated the power of the prevailing image and reinforced the government literature. They softened the image from one of rough frontier to a modern garden. They combined the beautiful, descriptive narratives with the science of agriculture. Beginning with a claim that agriculture has been successful in the Peace country since the earliest fur trade period, one pamphlet ended with an emphasis on the variety of flowers growing in the Peace, remarking about the

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[101] Canada, Department of the Interior, *The Peace River Country*, (1916), 5-34. The Macoun quote is from page 11 [emphasis original].

[102] Kitto, *The Peace River District*, (1919), 31, 34.

[103] Haworth, *On the Headwaters of the Peace*, 278 and 288-90.

"blaze of blossoms" in the spring and summer.[104]

No example stands out like the work of A.M. Bezanson. His pamphlet, *The Peace River Trail*, published in 1907, provided a clear exposition of the image of the Peace River country, and as such, was circulated widely by the Minister of the Interior, Frank Oliver. Bezanson was clearly a booster. The pamphlet included not only information on the Peace River region -- the Last West -- but also a lengthy description of Edmonton's future potential as its hinterlands opened up to settlers and mining interests alike. Edmonton was the hub and supply depot of a vast region. The growth experienced by the city in the first six years of the twentieth century would continue for generations. "None but the Omnipotent power can stop Edmonton's growth. She is the city of destiny for the Last West."[105]

Bezanson's claims for the Peace River country were no less grandiose. His portrait of the region combined the visual imagery with the utilitarian. "The first view of this mighty river to greet the traveller upon his arrival from Lesser Slave Lake," he began, "is one to warm the heart and stir the blood of the most apathetic nature lovers." He continues to describe the "Forks" in prose which would have pleased Horetzky or Macoun. He claimed the river "seems to carry in its depths the secret of the ages past, as it surely does the secret of those to come, for the millions upon millions of acres of fertile country which it drains."[106] Bezanson would not allow his readers to simply envision the land forcing them to take the image into the practical discussions of agricultural potential. The Grande Prairie country, far to the south of the river, was, he believed, "less favoured by nature in the matter of soils and climate than any of the noted prairies in the Peace River country."[107]

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[104] Ralph Harris, *The Story of the Peace*, (n.p.: n.d. (1917?)), 5-6, and 21-3.

[105] A.M. Bezanson, *The Peace River Trail*, (Edmonton: The Journal Company, 1907), 18.

[106] A.M. Bezanson, *The Peace River Trail*, 31.

[107] Bezanson, *The Peace River Trail*, 40.

Bezanson provided significant information, and what he considered proof, regarding the agricultural potential of the Peace country. Ignoring the fact that no highly positive scientific study had been published in 28 years, he remarked, "as to whether wheat and oats and vegetables can or cannot be grown successfully in the Last West we do not need to speculate or theorize -- we know." The evidence for this observation were the HBC and mission farming experiences at Fort Vermilion and Shaftesbury.[108] Similar statements were made about stock raising and the need for winter feed. Wild horse herds existed along the river and "nowhere in the whole country could I find an Indian who had ever put up hay or a shelter for his ponies." Bezanson therefore concluded that growing hay or building shelters would not be necessary.[109]

James K. Cornwall, "Peace River Jim," a prominent booster and the provincial MLA for the area, tried a different method of promotion. He invited reporters from the major southern newspapers to travel with him throughout the district. Their reports became a regular supplement in several newspapers.[110] Several other writers duplicated Bezanson's quest to boost the image of the Peace country as both magnificent landscape and agricultural garden. Jim Cook's 1912 pamphlet *The Canadian Northwest As It is Today* on one occasion depicts the river "winding down through the green hills" as a "great shining silver cord." On other occasions the pamphlet refers to the nature of the soil, the chinook winds, and the ability of stock to winter on the range.[111] Ralph Harris's description of the climate demonstrates the accepted image clearly.

> The writer believes that to best describe the climate of this part of the world it will be more convincing to speak of some things which it lacks and leave the rest to the imagination of the readers. A blizzard is rarely

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[108] Bezanson, *Peace River Trail*, 16 and 32.

[109] Bezanson, *The Peace River Trail*, 34.

[110] L.V. Kelly, *North with Peace River Jim*, (Calgary: Glenbow Institute, 1972). Frank Oliver's newspaper praised Cornwall's efforts for the excellent publicity they brought to Edmonton. *Bulletin*, January 25, 1911.

[111] J.M. Cook, *The Canadian Northwest as it is Today*, (Los Angeles, J.M. Cook, 1912), 17, 22-4, 26.

> known, and the winter trail when once broken remains firm and level till spring. There is very little moisture in the air during the winter, so the cold is easily stood and proves bracing and enjoyable. The average snowfall for the entire winter is not over **eighteen or twenty inches**....
>
> During the summer there are no cloudbursts, no tornadoes, no sunstrokes, no days of oppressive heat. We cannot refrain, after all, from saying that when the snows of winter melt the north is flooded with the most wonderful sunshine; that as early as **the middle of March** the grasses and wild flowers start into new life and change the whole land into a **bower of green**, and as if to make up to the short period of summer Old Sol works for nearly all of the twenty-four hours in each day and brings forth marvellous results.[112]

Harris and Cook both accepted the beauty and utility of the Peace country.

An image of the Peace, consequently, had been created by the Great War. It would not be static, but dynamic. The literature of the early settlers and travellers to the Peace Country suggests that they accepted the scientific appraisal and romanticised it. The image of the Peace as an agricultural and resource paradise awaiting the daring settler became the dominant theme of local boosterism. The power and importance of this image has even affected historical interpretation. J.G. MacGregor accepted imagery as reality. "The Peace River Country was indeed vast and promising," he wrote. "The arable section stretched from Fort St. John in the west to Lesser Slave Lake in the east and from the Little Smoky settlement in the south to High Level in the north. It was no less than an empire in itself, and developed accordingly."[113]

The image created in the nineteenth century resulted from the combination of utilitarian goals of the explorers and the spiritual lure of the River. The visual spectacle provided by the river, its valley, its tributaries, and its prairies left most visitors in awe. The utilitarian science of the 1870s created a "myth" which gave the countryside an agrarian role in a "civilised" world. The image of the Peace River country cannot be thought of solely in terms of its future agricultural potential nor solely in terms of its beauty and romance.

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[112] Harris, *The Story of the Peace*, 12.

[113] J.G. MacGregor, *Grande Prairie*, 11.

The impact of the image on settlers is harder to define. The important questions regarding the suitability of the climate for wheat growing in the Peace River region had never been properly addressed. The assessment of soil quality depended upon a simple visual assessment of flora, colour and depth. Furthermore, the scope and scale of the prairie or open land had increased with each ensuing booster publication. The magnificent splendour of the area's landscape, nevertheless, could, as it had with the scientists and explorers, influence the settler's identification with the region. Few settlers doubted the usefulness or splendour of the region. Only by studying the settlement process -- who were the settlers, when did they enter the region, how did they arrive, where and how did they select land, how long did they stay -- and the process of developing an agricultural economy is it possible to understand the impact of the myth.

Chapter 3
Settlement and Pioneers, 1890-1946: Culture and Landscape

Unjigah. During the period of study, it was analogous with the settlement process. The Peace did not begin as a powerful flowing river. It started as trickles of melting snow and ice in the mountains and turned into a torrent as the Finlay and Parsnip united in the Rocky Mountain trench. It flowed restlessly along its course towards the north, at times a rush of whitewater through narrow channels; at times a quiet, yet powerful flow as much as a mile wide. In the spring, the river rose as the melting mountain snow filled the channel with fresh water. It crashed forward cutting new channels, damaging and sometimes destroying the landscape. In the fall, the water level fell as the mountains held the newly fallen snow like a reservoir for the following year. As the river flowed through the countryside, tributary streams added their contents to the channel. In the lowlands around Lake Athabasca, the river neared its end. Rather than chiselling and carving the landscape, the river created a new environment fanning out into a huge fresh-water delta. The channel became cluttered with sandbars and other impediments to its course. No longer a single river, it became a myriad of small streams, making the identification of a single end point difficult if not impossible.

Like the river, settlement in the Peace River country prior to 1950 was a continuous and varied process. The first Euro-Canadians to settle in the countryside drained by the river were the fur traders. Transient in nature and limited to a few specific locations, it is difficult to call them true settlers. They were followed by ever increasing numbers, however. Prospectors and adventurers, Klondikers and speculators, and finally the agriculturalists whom history traditionally has called the settler community, took up residence in the Peace country. When the transition from a temporary enterprise to a more permanent community occurred cannot be precisely determined. Like the trickles of water at the source of the Peace, settlement began as individuals entered the region from numerous sources. Just as the trickles became the river when the Finlay and Parsnip joined, a significant change in the pattern of settlement occurred between 1909 and 1911. In the period which followed these years, Euro-Canadian settlers, in a fashion similar to the river, flowed into the district in a never ending stream, sometimes a torrent, at other times a trickle. Like the tributary streams, the settlers brought particles and fragments from their origins to add to the stream. The process of settlement in the Peace country slowly created a complex new regional community, perhaps analogous to a delta. As the river continues to flow, so settlement did not end with the creation of a community. It continues today as new residents enter the region seeking to make it their home, and helps to regenerate the optimism about the future and belief in unfettered growth, or boosterism, still characteristic of the region.

Most studies of settlement frontiers suggest a pattern to the settlement process. A short, intensive period of homesteading was followed by a period of consolidation and adjustment.[1] The pattern in the Peace River region does not fit this model. Homesteading data collected from the annual reports of the Department of the Interior, Alberta Department of Lands and Mines, and the B.C. Department of Lands provide an illustration of the settlement process in the Peace River country. Figure 3-1 suggests that at a regional level, homesteading could be described as occurring in two waves.[2] The first wave, perhaps better described as a gentle swell, began in 1911 and did not end until 1921; the second, a large powerful breaker, began in 1927 and ended in 1931. Between these two waves of settlement, prospective farmers continued to trickle into the district. Homesteading in the Peace River region, consequently, differed from the pattern in the southern prairies. It did not occur in a single, brief intensive burst of activity. Nor did it occur at a steady pace over the course of a generation. Instead, settlement of the Peace

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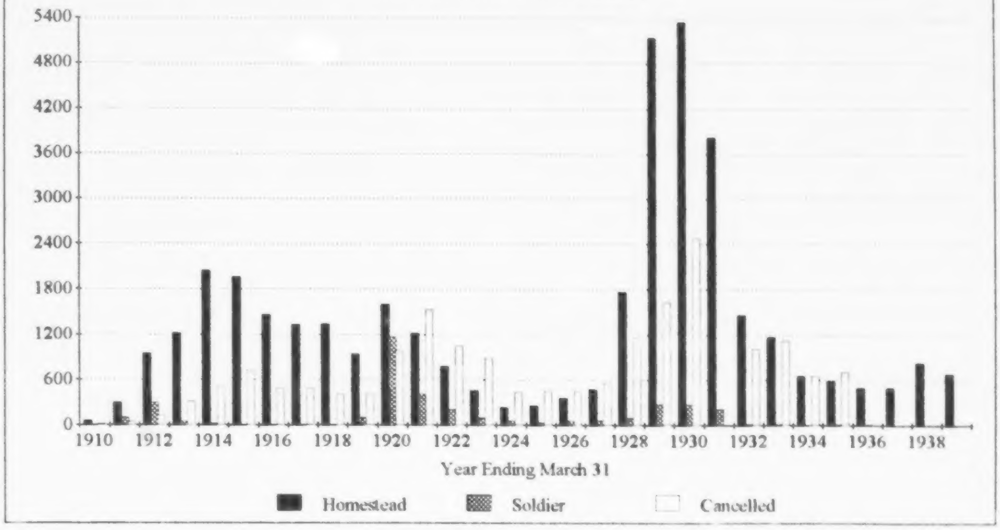
[1] Voisey, *Vulcan*, especially 33-42; Jones, *Empire of Dust*, especially 20-41; Tyman, *By Section, Township, and Range*. For an American example of this pattern in the early twentieth century see Paula Nelson, *After the West was Won*. Lyle Dick found that different townships could experience different patterns. In his study, Abernethy fit the pattern described, but Neudorf did not. Dick, *Farmers "Making Good,"* especially 27-30.

[2] The British Columbia data 1931 to 1939 is not charted. The Peace River Block was controlled by the Dominion until 1930 but after that date the data is not reported in a similar fashion. Hence, in the period 1931-1939 the rates are underestimated.

Figure 3-1

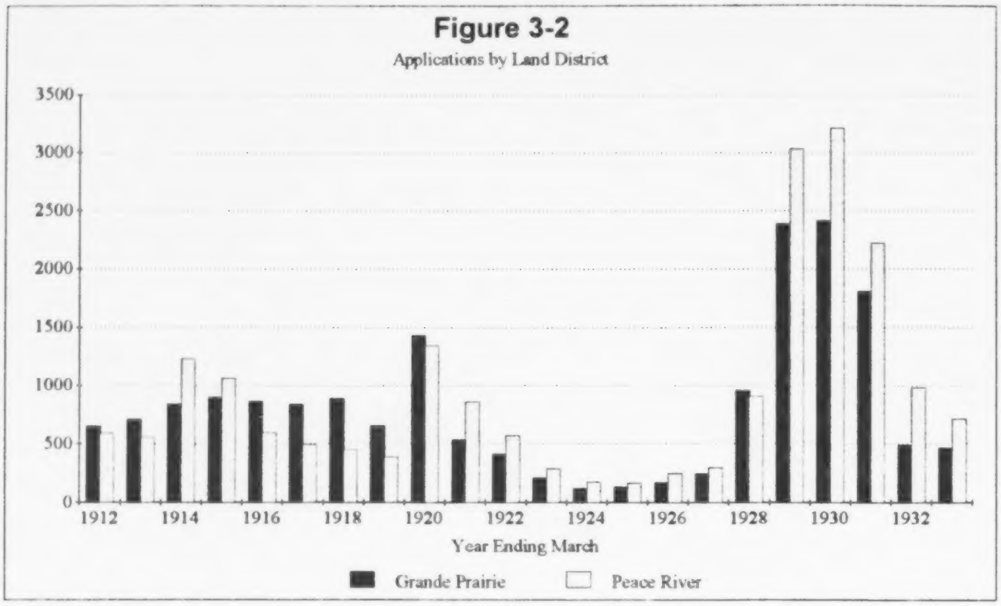
Settler's Land Grants: Peace Country



Cancellations were not reported in 1931 nor after 1935. Grants in B.C. are not included after 1930.

River region was a continuous, on-going, and permanent feature characterised by important waves of activity.

The timing and locational aspects of homesteading need to be considered to truly understand the settlement process. The Dominion Lands Branch divided the Peace River region into the Grande Prairie and Peace River land districts in 1911 (Map 2), and the land applications were administered separately until 1933. Figure 3-2 illustrates the variation in applications for land between these two land districts for the years when this information is available. It demonstrates that the pace of settlement varied between the districts. Homesteading in the Grande Prairie land district exhibits far more stable characteristics. The district settlement wave between 1912 and 1921 had a low rounded crest. Applications for new farmsteads in the Grande Prairie district during this period fluctuated around 900 per year with the exception of the 1919-20 season when soldier settlers distorted the pattern. The 1927-31 wave exhibited a similar pattern, increasing at a regular rate until it crested at approximately 2400 applications per year. The Peace River land district, on the other hand, experienced greater fluctuation. Indeed, three settlement waves can be discerned. Each wave waxed quickly, crested in clear sharp peaks, and waned swiftly into deep troughs. These intra-regional differences become



even more exaggerated when other factors are considered.

First, not all homestead applications were successful. Chester Martin estimated that 46% of all homestead applications in Alberta (40% in Canada) were cancelled. Since then, a variety of studies have demonstrated that this rate varied considerably from district to district.[3] The cancellation of homesteads is an important variable in the Peace River settlement pattern. The reports of the Dominion Lands agency and its provincial successors suggest that approximately 50% of the homestead applications in the Peace region were cancelled before patent.[4] The above average rate of cancellations suggests that the Peace River country was among the more difficult areas of Alberta to homestead successfully. Moreover, a peak in homesteading did not necessarily mean that the settlement population increased at an equivalent rate.

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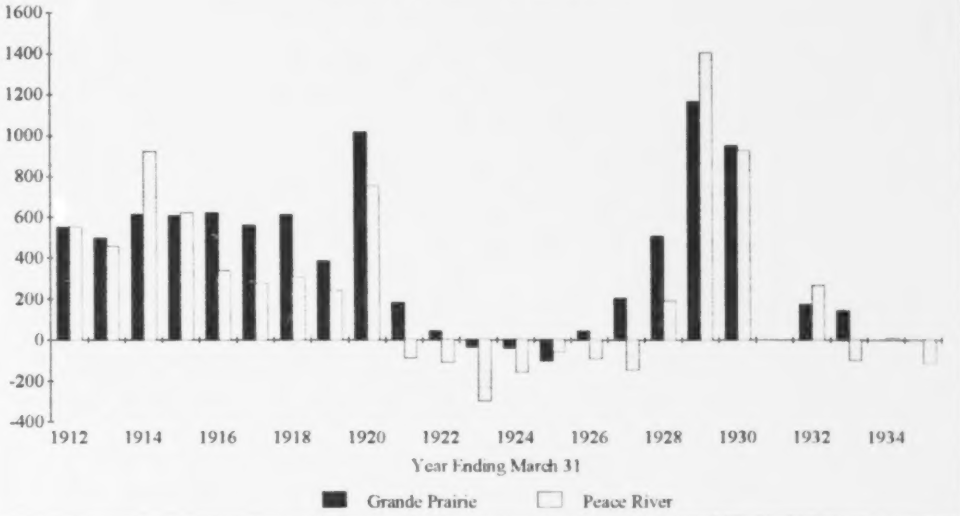
[3] Martin, *Dominion Lands*, 524. Voisey, *Vulcan*, 44. Dick, *Farmers "Making Good"*, 38.

[4] Determining the cancellation rate presents significant problems. The annual Departmental reports usually reported the number of cancellations at the land district or regional level. On a few occasions, however, this information disappears. The reports, hence, provide a general outline of cancellations, but lack precision. The total number of homestead entries (around 40,000) in the Peace River region, however, makes assembling the evidence through the homestead files an almost impossible task. In a detailed study of one Peace River district township, I found the cancellation rate was 48%. Irwin, "Settlement and Land Tenure in the Peace River Country: A Study of

Figure 3-3

Net Gain in Homesteads by Land District



Cancellations provide further evidence of the intra-regional variations within the Peace River settlement process. In Figure 3-3, the net gain in homesteads per year is calculated by subtracting the number of cancellations from the number of homestead, soldier's grant, and South African scrip applications. This same information is then used to calculate the ratio of entries to cancellations in Figure 3-4. Where possible, the information is also divided according to land districts.[5] Three important conclusions

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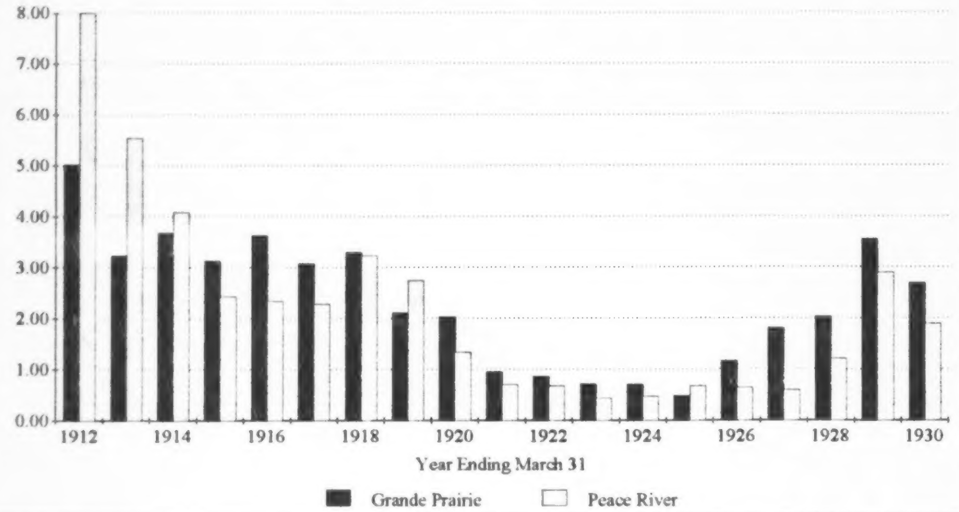
Township 83-25-W5," *Past Imperfect* 1 (1992), 8-9.

[5] The transfer of resources from the Dominion government to Alberta and B.C. in 1930 caused a problem in this regard. Neither the Dominion Lands Branch nor the Provincial Department of Lands reported cancellations by land district in 1931. The transfer also changed the land districts. Following the October 1930 transfer of lands to the provinces, B.C. set up a separate land district with an office at Pouce Coupé, and Alberta closed the Grande Prairie office in 1933 consolidating the Alberta portion of the Peace River region into a single land district.

Figure 3-4

Ratio of Applications to Cancellations



emerge from this information. First, the settlement waves become more important because net gains in settlers actually occurred primarily during these two time periods. Second, the earlier wave 1912-21 was more successful and more important than the second wave despite the difference in absolute size. Third, homesteading in the Grande Prairie land district proved more successful than homesteading in the Peace River land district.

The different application and success rates between the two settlement waves and the two land districts is partly explained by the landscape of settlement. The homesteaders' preference for open grasslands and the problems of establishing a new farm in the forested grey-wooded soil zone described in chapter 4, made the Grande Prairie district the preferred area of settlement. Although a monolithic description of either district would be misleading, these two districts encompassed different landscapes (Appendix 3, Map 1, Map 2, and Map 8). The Grande Prairie district consisted primarily of the Wapiti Plain and the southern aspect of the Peace River lowland. Located south of the Peace River and west of the Smoky River, including the southern portion of the Peace River Block, the Grande Prairie district consisted primarily of three large prairies and transitional park soils rated Class 2 or Class 3 agricultural soils by the

Canada Land Inventory (CLI).[6] The Peace River district contained the northern aspect of the Peace River lowland, the Lesser Slave lowland, the Fort Vermilion lowland, and the Clear Hills upland. Located east of the Smoky River, west of Lesser Slave Lake, and north of the Peace River, this land district contained far more forest land and grey-wooded soils rated Class 3 or Class 4 by the CLI.

In his work on the Lake Saskatoon and Beaverlodge areas Carl Tracie discovered that early settlers on the grasslands rarely failed. Those who settled on forest or bush lands, however, had high rates of failure. Since the majority of the settlers in the first settlement wave homesteaded on the open lands, the high ratio of success during this period is reasonable. By 1927, the majority of the open lands had been occupied. This second wave of settlers, therefore, took up homesteads on bush lands reducing their success ratios.[7] This information helps to explain the erratic pattern of settlement in the Peace River land district portrayed in Figure 3-2. The difficulty of settlement in the northern land district with its greater forestation and grey-wooded soils made settlers less likely to succeed in this area.

Although the intra-regional variations in landscape's vegetative cover contributed to the higher cancellation rates, it does not explain the northern Peace River land district's tendency to greater fluctuation in homestead applications. To understand the relationship between difficult settlement conditions and variable settlement rates, the economic conditions and metropolitan programs must also be considered. Both settlement waves coincided with peaks in the agrarian economic cycle. The first settlement wave occurred at the end of the Laurier economic boom and throughout World War 1 when high wheat prices encouraged farmers to expand their operations and newcomers to enter the business. The deepest trough in the settlement process occurred during the post-war recession when wheat prices fell and over-production made agriculture less viable. The second wave occurred as agriculture entered a cyclical upswing following the post-war recession.[8] The pattern continued through the Depression and into the post-war expansion after 1946.

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[6] See Chapter 5 for a detailed examination of soil quality and a complete explanation of the Canada Land Inventory soil survey.

[7] See the conclusion to Carl Tracie, "Settlement in the Peace Country," for a review of his research.

The introduction of Marquis wheat and the early maturing Garnet and Reward wheats also inspired the settlement waves. Vernon Fowke argued cogently that the development of Marquis wheat had little impact on southern prairie settlement.[9] In the southern prairies, moisture conservation to overcome the semi-arid conditions had to be overcome for successful agriculture. Summerfallowing, consequently, was a more important development than Marquis. The length of the growing season, however, had become the primary concern about agriculture in the Peace country.[10] Marquis matured up to a week earlier than its predecessor Red Fife, produced a higher yield, yet did not sacrifice any of Red Fife's important milling qualities.[11] The earlier maturity date opened a window for grain growing in the Peace Country. Marquis came into widespread use around 1911 at the same time as settlement began in the Peace region. Garnet and Reward were another week earlier than Marquis thus further improving agricultural possibilities.[12] Their introduction in the 1926-7 period coincided with the second wave of settlement.

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[8] Vernon Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1946). R.C. Brown and G.R. Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: Macmillan and Company, 1979). John Herd Thompson with Allan Seager, *Canada, 1922-39: Decades of Discord*, (Toronto: Macmillan and Company, 1985). Ken Norrie and Doug Owram, *Economic History of Canada*, (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989).

[9] Vernon Fowke, *Canadian Agricultural Policy: The Historical Pattern*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978, first edition 1946), 236-7. Several essays by Ken Norrie have followed up on Fowke's position. See especially Ken Norrie, "The Rate of Settlement of the Canadian Prairies, 1870-1911," *Journal of Economic History* 35 (June 1975), 410-427 and Norrie, "Dry-Farming and the Economics of Risk Bearing: The Canadian Prairies, 1870-1930," *Agricultural History* 51 (January 1977), 134-48.

[10] James Macoun, *Report on the Peace River Region*, 5; Waiser, "A Bear Garden," 48-52; Tracie, "Land of Plenty or Poor Man's Land," 115-22. See Chapter 2.

[11] Morton, *History of Prairie Settlement*, 147-49.

Government programs and booster propaganda fit into this cycle as well. During the Laurier settlement boom, the federal and provincial governments encouraged settlement in the Peace River district through increased promotion and railway development.[13] The combination of improved economic conditions, early maturing wheat, and promotional activity encouraged the first settlement wave into the region. The same elements also led to the second wave. As the economy of agriculture improved in the Peace River region, the government and booster campaign increased. At the focal point were the award-winning grain exhibitions by Wembley farmer Herman Trelle.[14]

While both districts were susceptible to the economic cycle, its impact was less dramatic in the Grande Prairie land district. Open lands in this region were accessible to the railway, and thus commercially viable. During the troughs in the settlement process, the few settlers seeking land continued to enter this area, and met with some success. Large tracts of open land also existed in the Peace River district in the Fort St.

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[12] See Morton, *History of Prairie Settlement*, 149-53.

[13] Tracie, "Agricultural Settlement in the Peace Country," MA Thesis, 1967, 29 provides information on the importance of the Edson Trail. The role played by government and boosters is apparent in the article "First Big Land Boom on the Grande Prairie," *Bulletin*, September 2, 1911. The importance of the railway can be seen in the promotional work by the Department of the Interior. *Description of Surveyed Townships in Peace River*, (Ottawa, 1916), 7. The agent at Grouard also noted that the ED & BC was the most important reason for increased homesteading in 1914. "Report of the Interior, 1914" Sessional Paper 25, *Sessional Papers 1915*, Part I, 23. Burke Vanderhill cautions against putting too much emphasis on the railway. He argued that in some areas the railway arrived before settlers, in others after. In some cases the settlers expected a railway, in others they located in areas with few prospects for railway development. Vanderhill, "The Settlement of the Forest Frontier," 90-92.

[14] Both Dawson and Tracie point out that the improved price of wheat was not the only economic variable. The Peace country produced excellent crops in 1926 and 1927 while Palliser's triangle was dried out during this period. Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 45; Tracie, "Agricultural Settlement in the Peace," 53. For an example of the late 1920s boosterism, see John Imrie, *Peace River: An Empire in the Making*, (Edmonton: The Journal Company, 1929).

John, Clear Hills, and Battle River regions, but these areas were isolated from the railway and commercially less viable. Settlers would enter these areas only during the peaks in the economic cycle and when promotional activity climaxed thus accounting for the sharp crests of each wave in the Peace River region. As the cycle ebbed, however, their distance from market and higher costs led to increased cancellations. Its larger size, and consequently, the larger amounts of available land led more settlers into this area. The problems of settling in the forest, however, led to increased cancellations and as the cycle waned, a more dramatic decrease in homestead applications.

Farmers were not the only people to enter the Peace River country during the period of this study. Many people came to the Peace River country not as farmers, but as urban merchants and town dwellers. Carl Dawson called towns "incidental to the wave of land settlement," but William Cronon and Paul Voisey have noted that western developers believed that the west would contain both farms and cities.[15] Towns, as central places for financiers, merchants, and tradesmen, were essential to the farmers' successful pursuit of commercial agriculture. The rampant speculation at Grouard and Dunvegan or the activities of the Argonaut Company in the founding of Grande Prairie City, give credence to Cronon's argument. Both farmers and merchants sought commercial opportunities in the Peace country.

Towns or social centres based upon agriculture pre-date the settlement process. The first agricultural towns in the Peace country were the Dunvegan, Fort Vermilion, and Shaftesbury mission communities.[16] These early settlements offered services such as a flour mill and saw mill to new settlers. Rather than the beginning of a commercial agrarian economy, however, these communities represented an adjunct to the fur trade and traditional aboriginal lifestyles.[17] Located in the river valley, Dunvegan, Fort

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[15] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 39; and William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 34-5; Voisey, *Vulcan*, 53-74.

[16] Carl Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 18-22.

[17] The early role of Peace River Crossing as a fur trade trans-shipment point is described in PAA, Alexander Mackenzie Manuscript, Acc. 74.377, 24-5.

Vermilion, and Shaftesbury were better described as fur trade posts and missions than towns.

While the old communities of the Peace were primarily transportation centres focused on the river crossings, the new towns were commercial service centres for the settlement community.[18] Locational problems hence emerged. The earliest potential urban centres in the Peace country were Grouard, Peace River Crossing, and Dunvegan. These centres were not located to serve the agricultural population on the plateaux. New "urban" development in support of agricultural settlement occurred. These villages (perhaps local centres of population is a better term) often developed from a lone general store and a post office with school districts quickly following.[19] In other cases, however, the settlers obviously sought an urban rather than a rural lifestyle. They created towns as service centres for the agrarian community. The larger towns contained hotels, restaurants, general merchants, telegraph offices and newspapers.

The published census material makes studying urban growth exceedingly difficult. The census considered urban areas to be those centres which sought incorporation under provincial laws. Most villages in the Peace country did not seek incorporation until years after their role as an urban centre was firmly established. Table 3-1 shows the continuous but changing pattern of urban development which the published census provides. Towns grew and declined in relation to the settlement waves. Moreover, with the exception of Grande Prairie and, to a lesser degree, Peace River and Dawson Creek, the towns in the Peace River region all seemed relatively equal. Each town served a similarly sized agricultural community.

These variations in the homestead and urban development process do not change the fact that settlers continued to enter the Peace throughout the period 1910-1950. It remained at a frontier settlement stage and never entered the consolidation period. The limitations of the published census returns make it impossible to calculate the population

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[18] Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 238.

[19] This is the experience cited for Vanrena by Nicholson, *Heart of Gold*, 10.

Table 3-1

Population of Incorporated Urban Centres

	1916	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946
Beaverlodge				211	203	331	443
Berwyn						206	308
Clairmont		130	75	110	104	102	
Fairview				260	393	432	487
Fahler			128	253	284	244	279
Grande Prairie	337	1061	917	1464	1478	1724	2267
Grouard	268	375	348	261	185	347	
Grimshaw				137	129	169	287
High Prairie							643
Hythe				278	260	247	288
McLennan							823
Peace River	742	980	582	864	883	873	997
Rycroft							272
Sexsmith				304	298	325	302
Spirit River		210	167	232	234	276	362
Wembley				183	173	188	237
Dawson Creek						518	
Pouce Coupe						251	

of the Peace River region with any precision. The Census divisions changed periodically, but remained relatively consistent for the period 1921 to 1951 (Map 27). During this period, the Peace River country contained all or part of four census divisions. Alberta Census Division 17, consisting of the northern third of Alberta, poses a significant problem. It includes significant areas not part of the Peace River region, but the published censuses do not provide an intra-divisional break down of population in this district prior to 1941. A similar problem exists with B.C. Census Division 10, consisting of the north-eastern area of B.C.[20] It is possible, nevertheless, to illustrate the regional population trends using the information for Alberta Census Division 16 and Census

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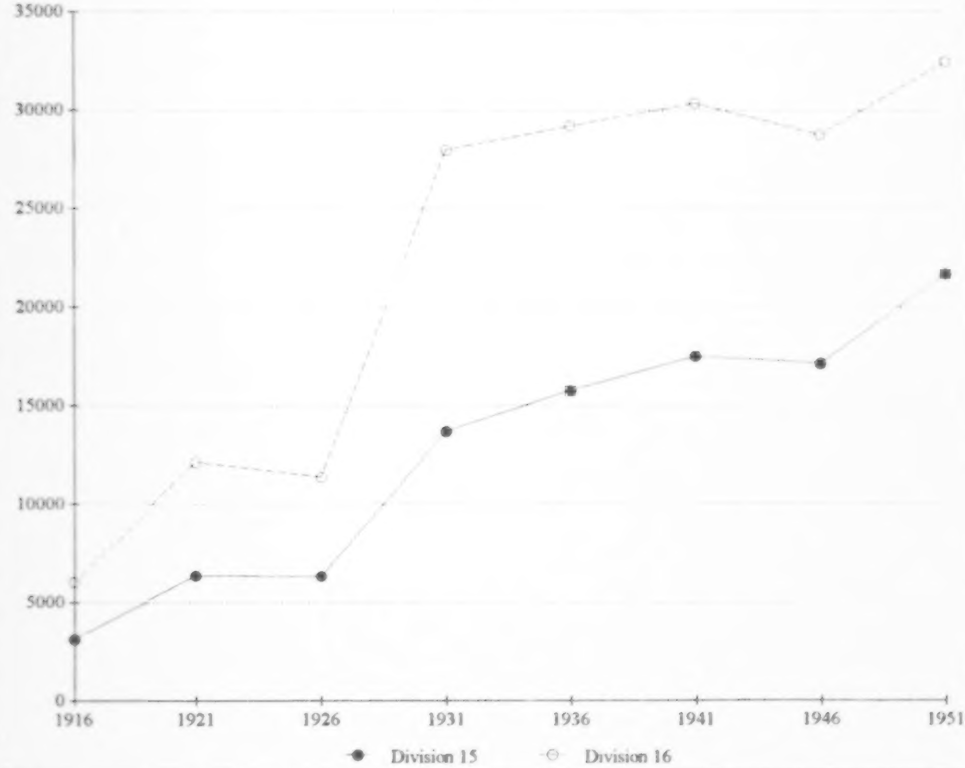
[20] Another important problem emerges when using the data for B.C. Census Division 10. Unlike Alberta, B.C. had only a decennial census taken. The information is thus available for 1921, 1931, 1941, and 1951. The settlement waves, the most important feature of Peace River demography, ebbed between these census years, hence the B.C. data miss these important developments.

Division 15.[21] Census Division 16 is the most important of these areas. It contains all of the settled area between the Clear Hills and the Wapiti River west of the Smoky. Census Division 15 contains the settled areas east of the Smoky, but also contains much of the Athabasca River region as well. The majority of people in these two divisions live in the Peace River country, and, more importantly, intra-divisional breakdowns of population have been published.

Figure 3-5

Population



Voisey's work on Vulcan shows that population in that district increased rapidly, peaked, and then declined.[22] This pattern represents the typical demographic pattern of pioneer society. It demonstrates that people seeking financial opportunities moved into a district in large numbers following the opening of settlement, and then a period of consolidation and maturation occurred as speculators and suitcase farmers left the district. Figure 3-5 shows that the population in these two divisions followed a distinctive pattern from that described in other settlement zones. It grew rapidly, peaked, declined slightly, and then grew again, peaked, declined slightly, and then grew again. This variation on the traditional pioneer population patterns indicates the continued importance of settlement within the Peace River region. Furthermore, it suggests Peace River, as a region, never entered a period of consolidation following settlement. While a brief decline occurred following each settlement wave as speculators left the district, they were quickly replaced by a new wave of opportunity seekers.

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[21] These two census divisions appeared consistently between 1921 and 1951. In the 1916 Census, a township and municipal level breakdown of population statistics exists. Simple calculations, consequently, allow this data to be included in the charts.

Besides continued population growth, several other demographic characteristics of a pioneer society are visible in the Peace River country throughout the period of study. The ratio of men to women remained at unnatural levels well above those in Alberta as a whole. The sex ratio showed significant variation, but never fell below 120 men per 100 women throughout the study period. Indeed, following the settlement waves, the sex ratio in most districts surpassed 140 men per 100 women (Table 3-2). Even in the older settled districts, those municipalities settled in the 1910 to 1916 period, the sex ratio hovered near 130 men per 100 women. The lag between the Peace River country and the rest of Alberta is clearly apparent. Indeed, by 1951 the gender balance in the Peace River country finally approached the levels in Alberta thirty years earlier.[23] Nor did the time of settlement and the maturity of a settlement zone have an impact on the ratio of men to women. All of the Census Divisions included in the Peace River area, as well as the municipal districts settled during the first settlement wave, exhibit similar ratios of gender imbalance in 1951.

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[22] Voisey, *Vulcan*, 33-36.

[23] Voisey's study of Vulcan shows that the ratio of men to women reached the provincial average with 10 years of settlement. *Vulcan*, 19.

Table 3-2

Gender and Population in the Peace Country

Men

	1916	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	277256	324208	331123	400199	417954	426458	423997	492192
Peace River	5944	15597	12808	32233	30230	37045	30799	43879
Census Division 15	1951	3737	3556	7985	8811	9807	9340	11819
Census Division 16	3993	7474	6545	16400	16599	16957	16028	17758
Census Division 17	u.a	2978	2707	3359	4820	5265	5431	6433
Census Division 10	u.a	1408	u.a	4489	u.a	5016	u.a	7869
Older Settled Areas	u.a	3979	3939	6360	6608	6212	5495	5598

Women

	1916	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	219269	264246	276476	331406	354828	369711	379333	447309
Peace River	3172	9958	9713	22177	23426	28981	25162	36205
Census Division 15	1150	2621	2772	5679	6928	7677	7757	9844
Census Division 16	2022	4657	4807	11545	12605	13392	12705	14681
Census Division 17	u.a	1944	2134	2429	3893	4447	4700	5154
Census Division 10	u.a	736	u.a	2524	u.a	3465	u.a	6526
Older Settled Areas	u.a	2541	2914	4766	5083	4874	4311	4563

Men/100 Women

	1916	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	126.45	122.69	119.77	120.76	117.79	115.35	111.77	110.03
Peace River	187.39	156.63	131.86	145.34	129.04	127.83	122.40	121.20
Census Division 15	169.65	142.58	128.28	140.61	127.18	127.75	120.41	120.06
Census Division 16	197.48	160.49	136.16	142.05	131.69	126.62	126.16	120.96
Census Division 17	u.a.	153.19	126.85	138.29	123.81	118.39	115.55	124.82
Census Division 10	u.a.	191.30	u.a.	177.85	u.a.	144.76	u.a.	120.58
Older Settled Areas	u.a.	156.59	135.18	133.45	130.00	127.45	127.46	122.68

Older Settled Areas consist of Municipal Districts No. 739, No. 740, No. 829, No. 857, and No. 858

When age is factored into the sex ratio, the pioneer nature of Peace River society becomes clear. The predominance of young single men in the settlement process has been acknowledged in several studies.[24] It is thus unremarkable that a study of homesteading in one township in the Peace River land district found that two-thirds of the homesteaders were single and that over 40% were between 20 and 29 years of age.[25] The persistent importance of young men, and the imbalance in sex ratios in the Peace country, however, is much more significant. In Figures 3-6 through 3-9, the proportion of the population by age and gender is compared for the Peace region, Alberta, British Columbia, and Canada in 1931 and 1941. These figures clearly illustrate the pioneer demographic characteristics of the Peace River region.

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[24] For just one example see Lyle Dick, "Factors Affecting Prairie Settlement: A Case Study of the Abernethy region of Saskatchewan," *CHA: Historical Papers* (1985), 11-24, and his more detailed study *Farmers "Making Good,"* 38-9.

[25] Irwin, "Settlement and Land Tenure," 7-8.

Figure 3-6

Male Proportion of Population in 1931

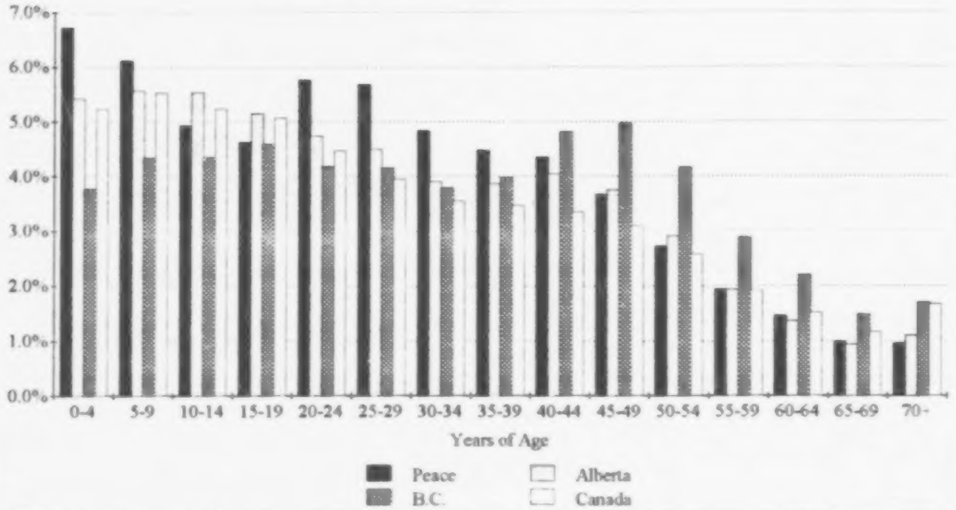
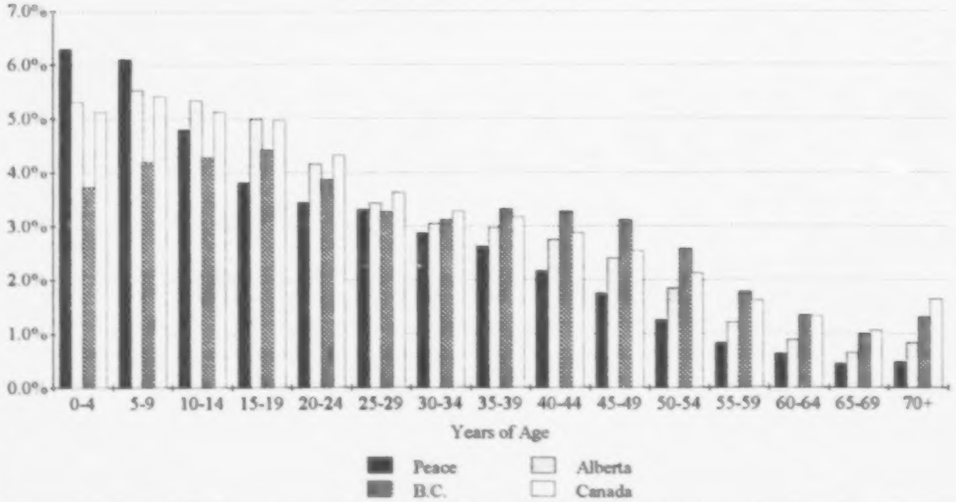


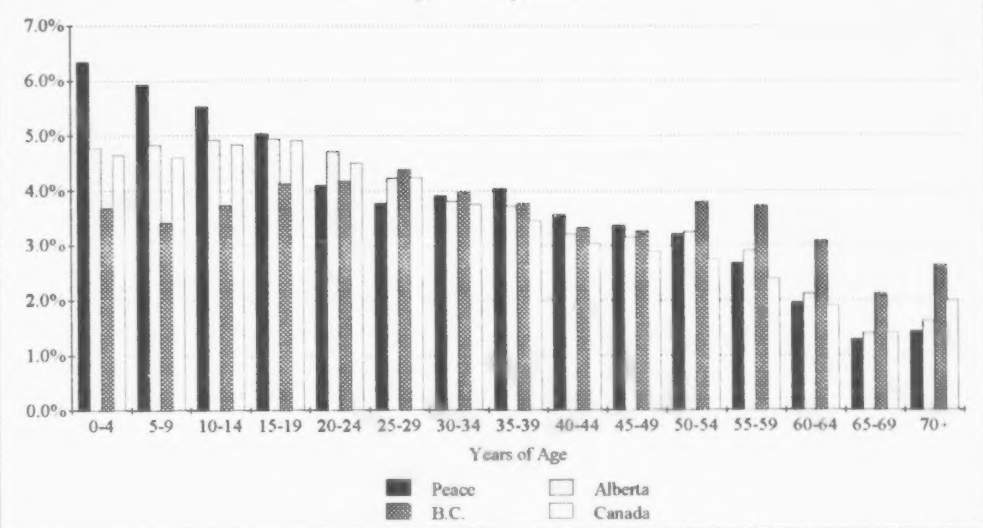
Figure 3-7

Female Proportion of Population in 1931



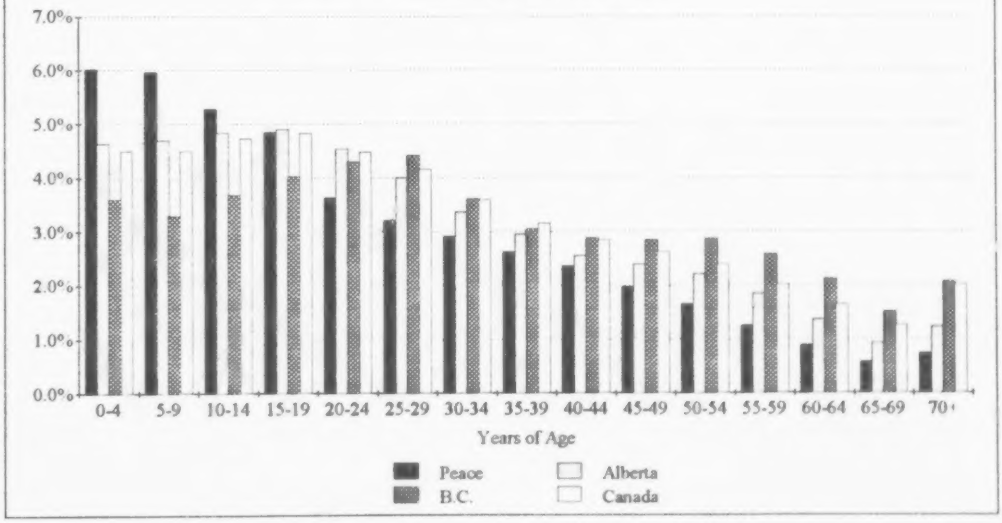
The frontier image of the Peace Country in 1931 is presented in Figures 3-6 and 3-7 charting the age and gender of the Peace River population. The demographic characteristics of the Peace River country distinguished the region from the rest of B.C., and to a lesser degree from Alberta. The settlement wave between 1926 and 1931 brought many young men into the Peace River region. Males between 20 and 39 years

Figure 3-8



Male Proportion of Population in 1941

Figure 3-9

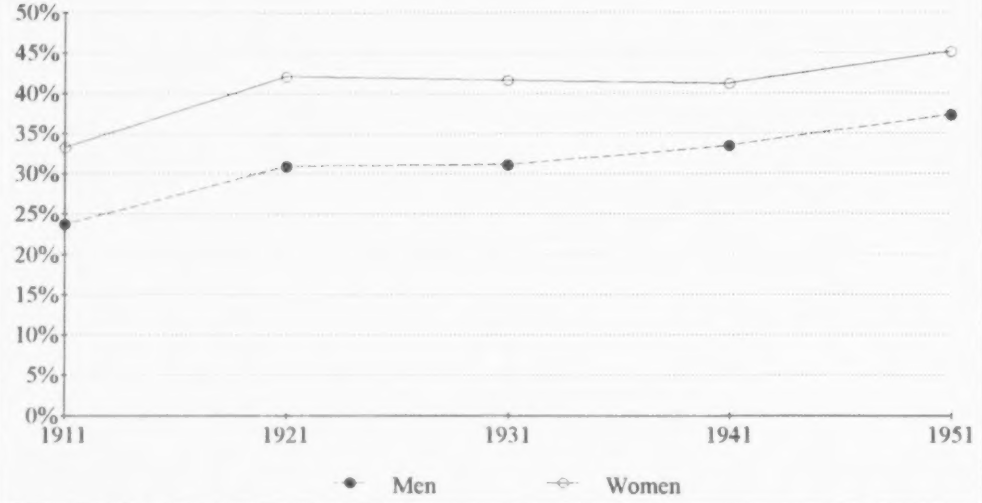


Female Proportion of Population in 1941

of age were over-represented in the Peace River country; females, on the other hand, were under-represented in all age ranges except the very young. This unbalanced ratio of men and women in the marriageable age range helps explain the comparatively low level of married people shown in Figure 3-10. Not all settlers in the Peace River region, however, were young single men. The over-representation of children under 10 years

Figure 3-10

Proportion of Men/Women Married



of age in the Peace River population suggests that many young couples also settled on the frontier.[26] Despite the lower marriage rate and the imbalance in the sex ratio, young, large families were in certain respects a defining characteristic of the Peace River community.

In Figures 3-8 and 3-9, the age and gender graphs for 1941 are not as clearly representative of a frontier community. Men aged 20 to 29 years were actually under-represented in the Peace River population by 1941. Indeed, the slight over-representation of men aged 35-49 years of age suggests that the original settlement community stabilised and is slowly moving towards a normal population pattern. Two characteristics of the population, however, suggest that the frontier nature of the Peace River region had not abated. First, women remained under-represented in all age categories outside of the very young, and especially in the range of 20 to 34 years of age. This is consistent with the continued imbalance of the gender ratio. Second, the persistence of young, large families is demonstrated by the continued over-representation of children and youths. The pioneer community, therefore, had changed but had not disappeared. Peace River remained a pioneer community in 1941.

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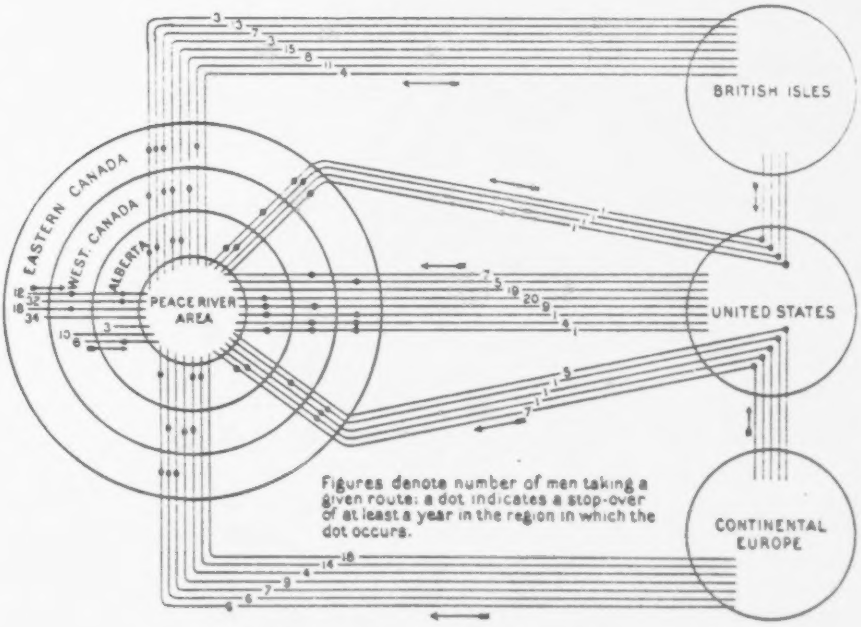
[26] Blaine T. Williams has argued that families were a much more important element of the settlement community than historians recognise. "The Frontier Family: Demographic Fact and Historical Myth," in *Essays on the American West*, H.M. Hollingsworth and S.L. Myres, eds., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 40-65. Lyle Dick argued that settler families were more likely to succeed than the single young male homesteader thus helping to explain why young men dominated the homestead process but families were important to community formation. Lyle Dick, *Farmers "Making Good,"* 31-8.

The continued importance of settlement, and the pioneer demographic characteristics which resulted, are only one part of the Peace River pioneer identity. The settlement streams also contained cultural elements from their sources. Carl Dawson's survey of 332 farmers in the Peace country provided some indication about the routes settlers travelled to the Peace River country. He obtained information for 328 of his subjects, and his chart, reproduced as Figure 3-11, indicates that Peace River settlers had experiences similar to their counterparts in the western United States and southern Canadian prairies. Most travelled extensively prior to arriving in the Peace River

Figure 3-11


BRITISH ISLES
EASTERN CANADA
WEST. CANADA
ALBERTA
PEACE RIVER AREA
UNITED STATES
CONTINENTAL EUROPE
Figures denote number of men taking a given route: a dot indicates a stop-over of at least a year in the region in which the dot occurs.

Regional derivation of 328 Peace River farm operators.

Source: C.A. Dawson *Settlement of the Peace*, 70.

country, and many would continue to travel.[27] The information also shows that the Peace River settlement community was primarily of North American origins. Most settlers spent at least some time in other areas of Canada and the United States prior to settlement in the Peace region. Only a small fraction of the settlers arrived directly from Europe.

The mobility of pioneers suggests that immigration was an important element of the Peace River settlement period, and indeed, many studies of settlement contain some information on the nature of the immigration regime at the time. Figures 3-12 to 3-15 chart the population of Peace River, excluding Indian and Métis people, by place of birth beginning in 1921. They illustrate an important change in the settlement community. Immigration was an important factor in the first settlement wave. As the first wave ended in 1921, over half of the settlers in Census Division 16 were immigrants to Canada, primarily from Britain, the United States and north-west Europe. In Census Division 15, a slightly higher proportion of Canadian born existed primarily due to the French Canadian settlers in the Falher district. The Canadian-born population in Division 16 came primarily from Alberta or Ontario; in Division 15, Alberta or Quebec.

The proportion of immigrants to Canadian-born pioneers slowly decreased from this time onward and, by 1951, nearly 80% of the people in Peace River were Canadian born. Settlement of the Peace River country appeared to be a primarily Canadian affair. While Ontario and Quebec-born people remained substantial elements in the region, settlers from Saskatchewan and Manitoba had increased in importance. A substantial majority of Peace River residents, however, were born in Alberta. This information does not suggest that immigration failed as a source of settlers. Figures 3-12 to 3-15 disguise the increase in the raw number of immigrants living in the Peace River region. The second wave of settlers, substantially larger than the first, had altered the pattern of

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[27] Voisey, *Vulcan*, 13-17. D.A. McQuillan, "The Mobility of Immigrants and Americans: A Comparison of Farmers on the Kansas Frontier," *Agricultural History* 53 (July 1979), 576-96. Karel Denis Bicha, *The American Farmer and the Canadian West, 1896-1914* (Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1968). Irwin, "Settlement and Land Tenure," 10-13, 19-20.

Figure 3-12

Place of Birth: Census Division 15

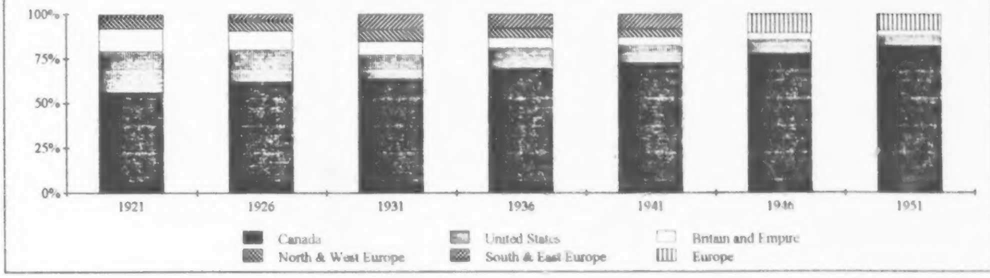


Figure 3-13

Place of Birth: Census Division 16

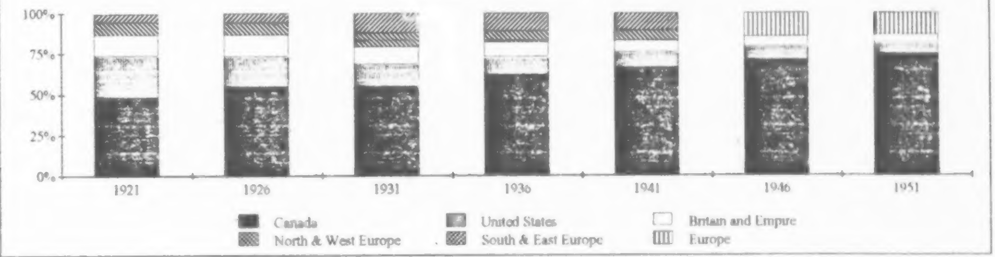


Figure 3-14

Place of Birth: Peace River Block

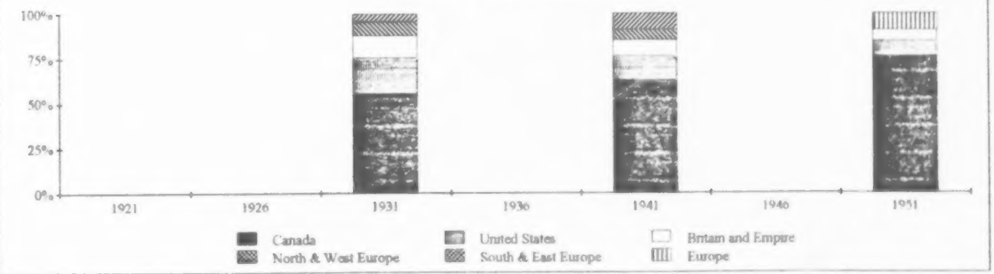
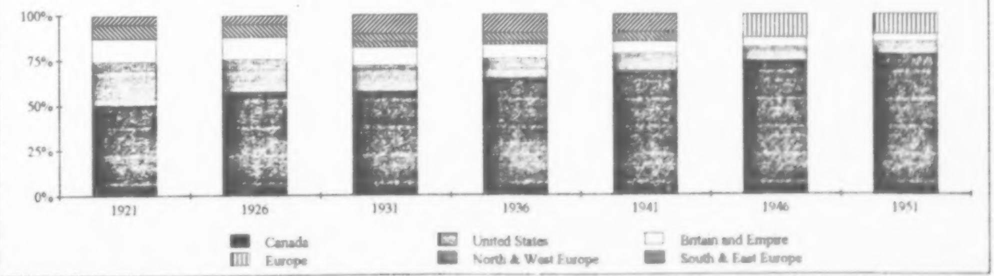


Figure 3-15

Place of Birth: Peace River Country



immigration. The proportional increase of settlers born in central and eastern Europe between 1926 and 1931 demonstrates the importance of these immigrants in the second wave of settlement. The charts also illustrate the declining importance of British and American immigrants to the Peace River region. American and British-born people constituted 40% of the Census Division 16 population in 1921, but only 10% in 1951.

Since immigration is inter-connected with the settlement process, and because the settlement process itself exhibited intra-regional variation, intra-regional differences between the Census Divisions on the issue of immigration would be expected. The predominance of American and British-born immigrants in the first settlement wave, and the proportional increase of central Europeans in the second wave means the timing of settlement would produce different patterns. Surprisingly, however, the population of each Census Division appears similar. Indeed, by 1951, the proportion of immigrants to Canadian-born settlers lacked any significant regional variation at the census division level. This lack of regional diversity provides further evidence that settlement occurred throughout the Peace River country during the period of study.

Place of birth is only one element of a settler's cultural identity. Ethnicity must also be considered. Indeed, ethnicity is one of the key components of identity. Chain migration has long been understood as an important element in the settlement process.[28] The process of settlers finding farms in close proximity to neighbours from the same ethnic group is born out in the census data for Peace River. In Appendix 3, Map 9, Map 10, Map 11, Map 12, and Map 13 people in municipal divisions in Alberta, and geographic areas in B.C. are charted by ethnicity. In the Alberta maps, two different areal definitions are used to demonstrate that the sample size and areal component is important to this analysis.

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[28] Two important general studies are Carl Dawson, *Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936) and Jean Burnet, *Next Year Country*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951). Several articles by John C. Lehr describe the process with particular reference to Ukrainians. For example, ""The Peculiar People": Ukrainian Settlement of Marginal Lands in Southern Manitoba," in *Building Beyond the Homestead*, David Jones and Ian MacPherson, eds., (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988), 29-46.

The importance of ethnicity increased with the spatial scale. In maps to demonstrate the ethnic variation between different areas of the Peace River country in 1921 and 1941, the smaller municipal divisions in Alberta before 1946 are used. These maps show the remarkable ethnic variation within the Peace River country, and the consistency of this variation within a district. Note that in 1921 and 1941 French people were a small proportion of the regional population outside of I.D. 796 where over three quarters of the people were French. Scandinavians, on the other hand, lived in substantial proportions throughout the Peace, but dominated in I.D. 771 where one half the population was Scandinavian in 1921 and 1941. In other areas such as I.D. 830 or 859, a small population was overcome by a settlement wave thus changing the ethnic composition of the district. These areas tended to be on the fringe of the settlement zone, and the new group tended to be eastern European. A map using a larger scale and smaller areal units would provide even greater evidence of ethnic variation and group settlement.

In Map 10, however, the larger municipal divisions designated in 1946 are used to illustrate ethnicity in 1931. As the areal region considered increases, the domination of British people becomes clear. British people make up the largest group in almost every municipality. Only the large French Canadian community along the Smoky River in M.D. 130 broke with this pattern. Other ethnic groups certainly played an important role in different areas, eastern Europeans in M.D. 133, Germans in M.D. 136, and Scandinavians in M.D. 126 are obvious examples, but no group had the territorial extent or importance of the British. When Census Divisions are considered as the unit of study for ethnicity of the population, the British domination and the exceptional nature of the French community at Falher become even more noticeable. In Figure 3-16 and 3-17, the 1931 and 1941 census information on ethnicity in the Peace country is charted for urban communities in the Peace and for the rural population of each Census Division. Notice that the ethnic composition of the population remained relatively stable between 1931 and 1941, and that the British pioneers are the largest group in each Census Division. More importantly, the urban community was approximately 60% British. In each census division, one group stands out because of its exceptional importance: the French

Figure 3-16

Ethnicity in 1931: Urban/Rural

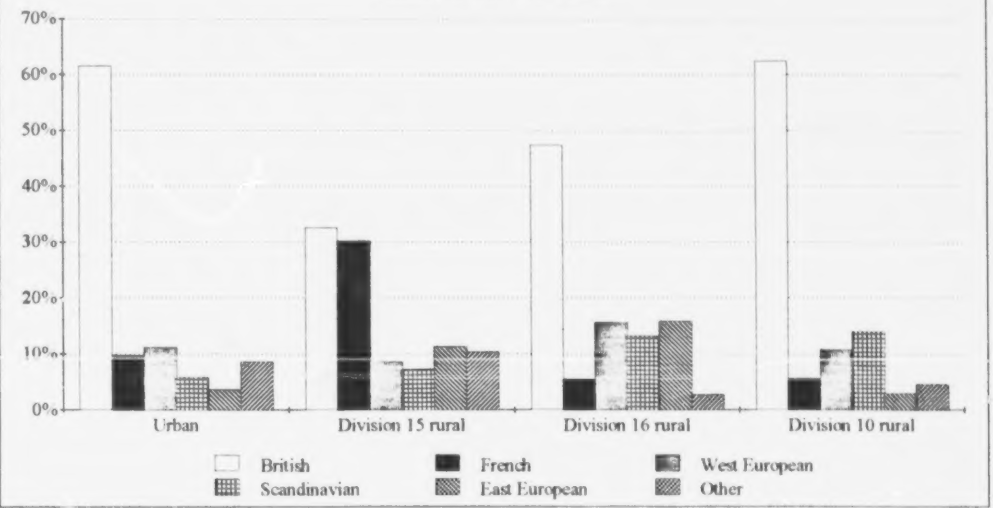

Figure 3-17

Ethnicity in 1941: Urban/Rural

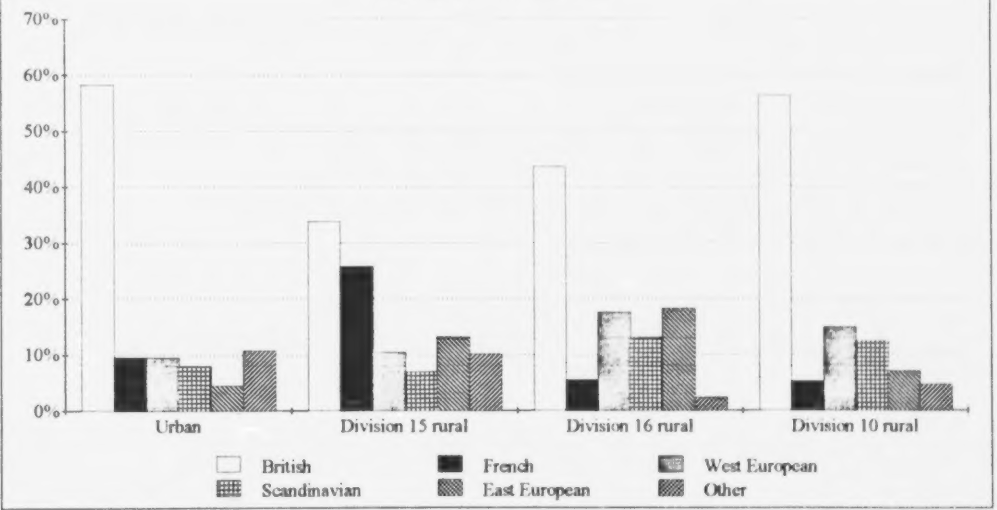

Figure 18 and 19 exclude Indian people on Reserves. See Appendix 2, Table 5 for the raw data.

Canadians in Census Division 15, the Scandinavians in Census Division 16, and the British in Census Division 10. Eastern Europeans were an important and growing group in Census Division 15 and 16, while they were unimportant in Census Division 10. Western Europeans, Germans and Dutch predominantly, were widely dispersed throughout the countryside with small concentrations of Germans at Friedenstahl (near the town of Fairview) and Dutch at Debolt.

A successful regional identity must overcome an ethnic identification, or find a way to accommodate it. The divergent ethnic groups, the variable pattern of ethnicity, and the local concentrations of ethnic populations all formed barriers to the creation of a regional identity. Inter-ethnic tension could, and sometimes did, create regional problems. Although evidence of nativism or racism in the region is limited, the booster pamphlets indicate a prevailing attitude existed. These pamphlets advertised the predominance of British, American, German, Scandinavian and Dutch people as a symbol of their settlement frontier.[29] That all of these western and northern European ethnic groups were associated with the progressive nature of the area suggests that many traditional Alberta attitudes towards immigrants existed in the region. Central and eastern Europeans did not seem to play a role in the regional promotional pattern. The regional identity, therefore, had tremendous limitations imposed upon it. The settlement islands described in Chapter 4 provide assistance in understanding how ethnic diversity and regional identity could co-exist. The peculiar and distinctive pattern of isolated island pattern of settlement and the local concentration of ethnic groups meant that a regional identity did not necessarily pose a threat to ethnic communities. They could maintain their ethnic identity within their community, and share in the creation of modern social institutions.

The social patterns of interaction which developed in the region helped to build a regional identity within the diverse population. All settlers, regardless of ethnicity, sought to create the elements of a modern agricultural community. They struggled to overcome what has been referred to as the "social cost of space."[30] They built local schools and churches to educate their children and provide a spiritual foundation for the community. These facilities were desired by all members of the regional community and allowed ethnic communities to express their identity within the regional framework. Similarly, all communities sought medical assistance and hospitals. Drama nights, music festivals, and sporting events, moreover, were the most important social activities within the region. These activities overcame ethnic diversity and challenged the pioneer conception of the Peace Country. Drama, music, and sport provided for social interaction and suggested that leisure and culture were significant aspects of Peace River life. The pioneers pointed to the schools, churches, hospitals, sporting facilities, libraries, drama clubs, and music festivals as symbols of the modern conveniences of Peace River society.

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[29] Peace River Board of Trade, *The Peace River Country,* (Peace River: n.p., 1926). Grande Prairie Board of Trade, *Facts Worth Knowing about the famous Grande Prairie District in the Peace River country*, (1928). *Grimshaw District, Peace Municipality and the Battle River Prairie. Some facts concerning settlement and farming in one of the choicest sections of the Peace River Country,* (Peace River, 1928). Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

Regional identity thus formed around the basic elements of pioneer life in the Peace River region. Peace River remained a settlement frontier throughout the period of study, and the on-going settlement experience became the foundation for the regional identity. Peace Riverites were pioneers, and all new members of the community would share in this process. Moreover, the continued pattern of settlement meant Peace Riverites continued to be pioneers. The settlers, like the flow of water in the river, fought with the landscape. At times the landscape won and settlement could not overcome the environmental challenges, but during a flood of settlement, the settlers would chisel and transform the landscape cutting new channels.

Settlement resembled the flow of the river in another way. Each new settlement stream added to the community and became a part of the river of settlement. The continued need for new pioneers made all immigrants and all ethnic groups worthwhile. No immigrant community nor ethnic community became an outsider. Local identification with a sub-district certainly existed, but the whole region slowly came to share in this identification. The pioneer based identity in the Peace River region had to overcome the intra-regional variation, however. It formed around the pioneer experience, but also came to relate to the process of settlement itself. Settlement in the Peace River country forced the pioneers to adapt to a distinctive landscape. Through the adaptive process, another element of the regional identity emerged.

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[30] Carl Kraenzel, "Great Plains Regionalism Reconsidered," in *Perspectives on Regions and Regionalism*, B.Y. Card, ed., (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1969), 83-5. Mary Hargreaves, "Space: Its Institutional Impact in the Development of the Great Plains," in *The Great Plains: Environment and Culture*, 205-23.

Chapter 4

The Settlement Process, 1890-1945

Metropolitanism and Environment

Unjigah had transformed the landscape over the centuries. It had chiselled a canyon through the Rocky Mountains and carved a deep gorge in the soft soils of the plateaux. The river's course, however, did not go unchallenged. The landscape remained an obstacle and often forced modifications to the river's route. When the river encountered these impediments to its course, it sometimes meandered gently without changing direction or it could turn at right angles to pursue a radically altered path. Settlement of the Peace River region, like the river's course, transformed the landscape. The Canadian and Alberta metropolitan agents created the rules of settlement and monitored the progress of agricultural occupation in the region. The landscape presented obstacles which altered the course of settlement and imposed a distinctive pattern on the process. The settlers who arrived in the Peace country slowly came to understand the problems posed by settlement in the new landscape. Through their participation in the settlement system, an identity emerged, an identity which sought to conquer the landscape, but, at the same time, accepted the limitations it imposed.

Studying the land settlement process and patterns in western Canada is a relatively new phenomenon. No historian like James C. Malin or Paul Wallace Gates inspired Canadian scholars to investigate the relationship between demography, land occupation, community formation, and the new society. For a generation, the detailed work of the Frontiers of Settlement Series conducted during the overly pessimistic 1930s stood alone in Canada.[1] Only in the 1970s did James Richtik and John Tyman begin the process of examining the framework and pattern of settlement in Western Canada.[2] More recently Canadian historians have started to fill this surprising gap in scholarship. Lyle Dick on the Abernethy region of Saskatchewan, David Jones on the Medicine Hat area of Alberta, Donald Loveridge on the Municipality of Sifton in Manitoba, and Paul Voisey on the Vulcan district of Alberta, have studied the relationship between land settlement patterns and the developing community.[3] These substantive works have linked settlement with societal development, but do not address the relationship between settlement and regional identity. In the Peace River country, this connection is found in the conflict between metropolis and environment.

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[1] Paul Gates, "Homesteading in the High Plains," *Agricultural History* 51 (January 1977): 109-33. Swierenga, *Essays in Honour of J.C. Malin*; David Ellis, *The Frontier in American Development: Essays in Honour of Paul Wallace Gates*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). Several of the nine volumes in the Frontiers of Settlement Series are relevant to this study. See Carl A. Dawson with R.W. Murchie, *The Settlement of the Peace River Country*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934); W.A. Mackintosh, *Prairie Settlement: The Geographical Setting*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934); *idem*, *Economic Problems of the Prairie Provinces*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935); A.S. Morton

No aspect of settlement exhibits metropolitan influence more clearly than the rules of settlement. The Dominion government as the metropolitan agent managed the land and resources in much of the Peace River country and it regulated the timing, pace, and pattern of agricultural settlement. Under the terms of the Northwest Territories Act and later the Autonomy Bills, the Dominion maintained control over lands in Alberta. It also controlled a 3,500,000 acre block in the British Columbia section of the Peace region under the Confederation agreements.[4] Settlement of the Peace River Country,

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and Chester Martin, *History of Prairie Settlement and Dominion Lands Policy*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938); and R.W. Murchie, *Agricultural Progress on the Prairie Frontier*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936).

[2] James Richtik, "The Policy Framework for Settling the Canadian West, 1870-1880," *Agricultural History* 49, no. 4 (1975), 613-28; John Tyman, *By Section, Township, and Range*, (Brandon, 1972).

[3] Lyle Dick, *Farmers "Making Good": The Development of Agriculture in the Abernethy District, Saskatchewan, 1880-1920*, (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1989); David Jones, *Empire of Dust*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988); Donald Loveridge, "The Settlement of the Rural Municipality of Sifton, 1881-1920," (Master's Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1977); and Paul Voisey, *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community*, (Toronto: University of Alberta Press, 1987).

[4] NAC, Department of the Interior Papers, RG 15, D IV 10, v. 2082, "Peace River Block." *Statutes of British Columbia*, 1883, c. 14. This issue is commented upon by A.S. Morton and Chester Martin, *The History of Prairie Settlement and Dominion Lands Policy*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937), 227 and 269. B.C. kept its share of the Peace River

consequently, occurred within the framework of all previous prairie settlement.

Prior to the Klondike Gold Rush, the Dominion made no effort to implement a settlement scheme for the Peace River region. The metropolitan community had little need for a new isolated settlement frontier in the 1890s, and the known resources of the Peace River region did not warrant the expense or effort of a settlement program. The Klondikers, however, forced the Dominion government, the Beaver and Cree bands, and the Métis communities to take the first steps towards agrarian settlement. On the one hand, the increased booster activity in Edmonton which accompanied the Gold Rush made it obvious that settlement of the Peace would occur at some future time. On the other hand, the Klondikers use of cash to purchase goods and the transformation of the fur trade barter economy it represented made an agreement with the aboriginal people a priority. These two features, combined with the realisation that gold and coal resources existed in the Peace River valley, led the government to begin the expensive process of extinguishing aboriginal title.[5]

Treaty 8 and the Métis claims settlement which accompanied the treaty process was hastily negotiated and signed in 1899 and 1900. It covered an area much larger than the Peace River region, but it is clear that the primary concern of the negotiators was the Peace River valley and the plateaux where farming would occur in the future. The treaty provided the Beaver and Cree communities with reserves, either large reserves based upon band size or smaller reserves taken in severalty by individual families,[6] but did not

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country restricted until the federal government selected its block in 1907. For information on the Dominion's handling of this block see House of Commons, Unpublished Sessional Papers, 1925, Sessional Paper 204.

[5] René Fumoleau, *As Long As This Land Shall Last*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); David Leonard, "A Delayed Frontier: Peace River until 1910," (forthcoming manuscript). I would like to thank Dave Leonard for making his research available to me.

[6] The Beaver tended to take large reserves for the entire band such as Indian Reserve 152 at the present location of Fairview. The Cree chose both styles of reserve. Indeed, in some cases, Cree bands divided into a larger group and several smaller family size groups for the purpose of reserves. Indian Reserve 151, for example, had some large

require the people to move on to the reserve immediately. The Métis claim settlement provided each claimant 240 acres of scrip or $240. The treaty commissioners made little effort to distinguish between Métis and Indian peoples during the process, however, and thus some Metis took treaty while some Indian peoples accepted scrip.

The first stage of the Dominion settlement process had thus been completed by 1900. Aboriginal claims had been resolved to the satisfaction of the government. The rules of settlement now had to be formalised. Although the settlement policies of the Dominion were not designed for settlement in the northern forest frontier, the survey and homestead systems used on the southern prairies were extended into the Peace River country. J.B. Saint Cyr began the surveys of the Dunvegan and Shaftesbury settlements in 1907. The following year, H.S Colcroft and H. Selby joined him in the area between Grouard and Dunvegan, and in 1909, W.G. McFarlane began the survey of the Grande Prairie.[7] Land registration offices were opened at Grouard in July 1909, at Grande Prairie in 1911, and at Peace River Crossing in 1915. The Department of the Interior also divided the region into two land districts (Appendix 3, Map 2). Homesteaders were now welcome in the Peace River country.

The survey with its sections, townships and ranges extended into the Peace country, but the typical prairie township described so often in the literature did not exist. In reality, few typical townships existed anywhere on the Canadian prairies, but the townships in the Peace country were significantly different. In the typical township of 36 sections, sections 11 and 29 were designated as school lands, sections 8 and the south half and northwest quarter of section 26 were controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company,

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areas set aside for multiple families, and other smaller areas set aside for a single household. Indian Reserve 151 thus consisted of 12 separate land areas. A similar situation existed at Sturgeon Lake Indian Reserve 154. For more information see the forthcoming manuscript by Dave Leonard, "A Delayed Frontier."

[7] "Annual Report of the Department of the Interior (hereafter Report of the Interior), 1908-9," Sessional Paper 25, *Sessional Papers 1909*, Part III, 5; "Report of the Interior, 1908-9" Sessional Paper 25, *Sessional Papers 1910*, Part III, 4; "Report of the Interior, 1909-10" Sessional Paper 25, *Sessional Papers 1911*, Part III, 27.

all the remaining odd numbered sections were reserved for railway construction, and all the remaining even numbered sections were open for homesteading. In the typical prairie township, therefore, homesteading was allowed on 65 of the 144 quarter sections. The Canadian Pacific Railway, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Canadian government all played an important role in prairie settlement under this policy. Each group had a vested interest in settling an agrarian population in Canada. This combination of interests did not exist in the Peace River Country.

By the time the Dominion began to survey the Peace Country, the railway contractors who had received land grants had been forced to select their land.[8] Moreover, the Hudson's Bay Company entitlement to lands in the fertile belt under the terms of the Rupert's Land purchase did not apply in the Peace River Country.[9] As a result, in the typical Peace River township, sections 11 and 29 were designated as school lands and all the remaining lands were open for homesteading. In other words, a homesteader could choose from 136 of the 144 quarter sections. Settlement of the Peace River country thus could have resulted in a more compact settlement arrangement than existed on the southern prairies. Furthermore, the government was the only agent in shaping the Peace River lands and immigration policy.

Chester Martin and Paul Voisey both indicated that the railway lands, Hudson's Bay Company lands, and school lands were important elements of the Dominion lands policy. Martin argued that prairie agriculture required more land than the quarter section available under the homestead provisions and these reserved lands provided a pool of unclaimed land for future expansion.[10] Voisey agreed, but concluded that the lands only gained in importance if the activities of speculators are considered. The majority of railway lands in the Vulcan area ended up in the hands of land speculators and absentee landlords, thus providing a pool of land available for rent at a future date.[11] Since the pattern of agriculture envisioned for the Peace Country resembled that of the southern prairies, and neither the railway nor HBC had lands in the region, another supply of land for expansion had to be found.

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[8] The railway land grant system ended officially in 1894 and the Liberal government ordered all lands located or liquidated before 1908. A.S. Morton and Chester Martin, *Prairie Settlement and Dominion Lands*, 298; D.J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy," *The Settlement of the West*, Howard Palmer, ed., (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1977), 63-4.

[9] Canada, *Statutes*, 1908, c. 20, sec. 44.

[10] Martin, *Dominion Lands*, 414-5.

At first glance, it might appear that the Dominion recognised this problem. The same year surveying began in the Peace Country, the Dominion made several changes in the land regulations. The most distinctive of these changes, the re-introduction of pre-emptions and purchased homesteads, could have been designed for the Peace River settlement frontier. Under the terms of the new land regulations, a bonafide homesteader could, after filing an application for a 160 acre homestead, acquire a second quarter section of land as a pre-emption or as a purchased homestead. The cost was set at $3 per acre. Since these regulations allowed farmers to acquire up to 320 acres of land, it could have prevented a dense settlement pattern -- 4 settlers per section -- from developing in the Peace River country. In reality, however, the Dominion failed to anticipate problems in the settlement of the Peace River country. The pre-emption and purchased homestead regulations applied only in areas where the Dominion understood a settlement problem existed, the dry-lands south of the North Saskatchewan River.[12]

A more important change in the lands policy of the government came in the form of the Volunteer Bounty Act.[13] This act provided South African War veterans, including nurses, with a free scrip entitlement to 320 acres (two adjoining quarter sections) of Dominion Land. The South African scrip became an important element of the early Peace River settlement schemes. Several of the earliest settlers in the Peace region purchased the South African scrip in private sales and used it to establish large farms. This process could have been even more important to the Peace River country because it encouraged experienced southern farmers to enter the area in order to expand their land holdings. But, just as settlement of the Peace River region began in earnest, the Dominion closed the system and offered veterans $500 for unselected scrip effective October 31, 1913.[14]

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[11] Voisey, *Vulcan*, 44-51. R.P. Swierenga has pointed out the important role played by speculators on the American frontier. "Land Speculation and Its Impact on American Economic Growth and Welfare: A Historiographic Review," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 8 (1977), 294-8.

[12] Canada, *Statutes*, 1908, c.20; Martin, *Dominion Lands*, 419-20.

[13] Canada, *Statutes*, 1908, c. 67.

Settlement in the Peace River country, consequently, occurred almost entirely through the homestead system.[15] The most important settlement scheme outside of the homestead system was the Dominion experiment with a soldier settlement program after the Great War. To encourage the settlement of demobilised soldiers, the government established the Soldier Settlement Board (SSB) in 1917. Under the SSB guidelines, soldier settlers were entitled to a special soldier's grant of 160 acres in addition to the normal homesteader's grant. It also provided financial assistance through low interest loans for new soldier settlers and for those soldiers who had already started farms prior to enlistment. Immediately following the war, the SSB reserved most accessible land in the Peace River region for soldier settlers and encouraged them to settle in the area.[16]

As might be expected, the land policy thus served the interests of the metropolitan community. The land policy failed to acknowledge the distinctive conditions of settlement in the Peace River region. It promoted settlement of the Peace River country under the same rules as the southern prairies. The special rules like pre-emptions and purchased homesteads designed to help settlers in difficult areas like Palliser's triangle did not apply in the Peace River region. The settlement plan envisioned by the land policy would result in a settler occupying every quarter section with few options for expansion of farm holdings. The land and settlement policy, consequently, became a major source of concern and identity in the Peace River region. Settlement, population growth, and economic expansion were the primary goals of the local population, yet the problems of the settlement policy became a threat to the success of the early settlers.

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[14] Martin, *Dominion Lands*, 424.

[15] A prominent booster of the region and the editor of the *Peace River Record*, Chas. Frederick bragged with some exaggeration that "[t]here is not an acre of land owned by powerful corporations or individual speculators. It is a thickly settled community of homesteaders and of a stamp not often seen in most places of equal area." *Record*, May 27, 1915.

[16] Canada, *Statutes*, 1917, c. 2. *Record*, June 17, 1918.

Locating a homestead was the first task of every settler. Homesteaders selected their site after an evaluation of the environmental factors. Ronald Rees pointed out that in the southern prairies, the new immigrant had difficulty adapting to the treeless environment. They created a "cult of trees," and sought to create "the familiar."[17] Trees, therefore, were planted where they had not previously existed. The lure of the Peace River country, however, was quite different. The Dominion Land Agent at Edmonton, K.W. Mackenzie, noted "[t]he area of open prairie land now available within the district [Edmonton] has become comparatively small, and one result is that many are directing their attention to the Peace River district where it is understood there are large stretches of open land."[18] Settlers entering the Peace Country did not seek the forest, but rather tried to avoid it.

Grasslands and open prairie became the most important consideration in the selection of a farm site. Examining the Peace River settlement pattern in 1935, H.M. Leppard noted, "[m]atters such as relief, drainage, character of soil, water supply, in some cases even transport, appear to have been items of minor consideration with many settlers."[19] The desire to locate on the open prairie, however, should not be regarded as a willingness by new settlers to overlook commercial objectives for cultural or aesthetic considerations. The commerce of farming took priority. Settlers desired land which could be brought into cultivation easily; land which they knew was suited to growing wheat. Clearing forest land for agriculture was expensive, time consuming, and delayed the transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture. Nor did settlers simply forsake the railway. Some settlers certainly chose the location of their homestead on the basis of the railway. W.O. Harper recalled that he chose the Pouce Coupé prairie for his farm due to the promise that the ED & BC and PGE would meet there,[20] but it should be noted that he selected the open grasslands of the Pouce prairie rather than a forested region. People wanted to settle near a transportation route and, once land had been cleared, moved into such areas.[21] The commercial motivations of farmers and the landscape thus interacted in the settlement process.

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[17] Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 95-106.

[18] "Report of the Interior, 1909," Sessional Paper 25, *Sessional Papers 1910*, Part I, 27-8.

[19] H.M. Leppard, "Settlement of the Peace River Country," *Geographical Review* 25 (1935), 69. After conducting a statistical analysis of farm location in the southern Peace Country, Carl Tracie came to similar conclusions. Tracie, "Factors Affecting Farm Location in the Peace," 110-11; and Tracie, "Agricultural Settlement in the Peace," 55. See GMA, Loggie Collection, M4560, file 3, "Interview of S.E. Cushway by W.D. Albright, February 1, 1929; R.M. Patterson *Far Pastures*, 6; and R.G. Moyles, *Challenge of the Homestead: Peace River Letters of Clyde and Myrle Campbell*, (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1988), 2-6 for three examples of settlers venturing far from

As a result, the settlement pattern which developed in the Peace largely followed the pattern of open grasslands. It is best described as a series of islands isolated from one another by kilometres of unproductive forest land, each developing a self-contained limited identity. This island pattern remained the dominant feature throughout the settlement era (Appendix 3, Maps 3-7, "Limits of Settlement."). Two major areas of settlement immediately appeared. First and most importantly, the grasslands of the Grande Prairie were occupied. This vast expanse of rolling parkland was the most attractive area for farmers. Settlers on the Grande Prairie focused this early activity around the settlement at Flying Shot Lake (later to be the town of Grande Prairie), the trading post at Lake Saskatoon (eventually moved to Wembley), and in the valley of the Beaverlodge river. The second area of settlement during this period were the two portions of the Fairview/Berwyn prairie on the north side of the Peace River. This large

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the railway in search of open lands.

[20] Harry Giles, "Early Days in the Peace River," *Northwest Digest*, 8 (April 1952), 15.

[21] Along the proposed route of the Peace River to Edmonton highway, settlers occupied land which had been cleared by a fire. *Record*, July 2, 1925.

fertile prairie was divided into two distinctive settlement zones during the early settlement period. One area, called the Waterhole region, focused on the level grassland above Dunvegan. The other area, the Berwyn district, connected to Peace River Crossing and Shaftesbury by the treacherous Brick's Hill trail.

Several other districts also received settlers during the early settlement wave. Some farmers took land in the Spirit River prairie, a small open area focused on the old Hudson's Bay Company ranch and a promising divisional point along the railway. Other settlers ventured out to the Pouce Coupé prairie, the third largest prairie, but the most distant from market. These settlers hauled goods and grain by sleigh along the prospective ED & BC rail grade from Spirit River. Still other farmers found the High Prairie area at the western end of Lesser Slave Lake to be the most suitable for their new homes. In another example, Father Giroux and Father Falher led many French Canadians into the region along the Peavine River.

As settlement continued through the First World War period, settlers moved into the various islands of occupied lands and expanded them towards the forest fringes. The areas serviced by the railway, or at least accessible to a railway, became the most important in this period of expansion. The Grande Prairie settlement area expanded along all its boundaries slowly pushing settlement in to the willow, aspen, and spruce forest lands west of Lake Saskatoon, along the eastern banks of the Smoky River, and along the southern flank of the Saddle Hills. In a similar fashion, settlement on the Fairview/Berwyn prairie also expanded into the low range of willow and poplar scrub which divided the Berwyn and Fairview portions of the prairie. Several farmers also moved on to the northern fringes of this prairie district. Similar expansions from the grasslands into the forest fringe occurred at Falher and Spirit River (Appendix 3, Map 5, "Limits of Settled Lands, 1919).

The implementation of the SSB program did little to change this established pattern. Within each of the settlement islands, homesteads had been abandoned, or quarter sections overlooked. The soldier settlers quickly occupied these vacant lands, and resisted the movement on to the forest fringe of these settlement zones (Appendix 3, Map 6, "Limits of Settlement, 1922"). They also moved on to the lightly populated Pouce

Coupé prairie in the B.C. Block section of the region.[22] The soldier settlers, despite the government reservation of large sections of land in the Peace River region for their settlement purposes, expanded the existing zones of settlement and increased the density of the population within the settlement islands. By 1921, the Dominion land policy had restored homesteading as the primary option for land alienation and maintained about 6 million acres of open land in the Peace River country throughout the 1920s.[23]

The land policies of the Dominion combined with the landscape, consequently, had encouraged a problematic pattern of settlement. Rather than a cohesive area of increasing population and size, the emerging pattern had islands of high density farm populations isolated from one another by large sections of under-utilised forest, highlands, and muskegs. The impact of the post-war recession 1920-25 must be interpreted through this framework. Scholarly work has pointed to two explanations for the problems in northern and western settlement. It argues that the purchase of farms at inflated values due to the activities of the SSB, the movement of in-experienced urban dwellers to farms after the war, the over specialisation in wheat due to high war-time prices, the eventual post-war decline in wheat prices, and high freight rates, all hurt northern farmers.[24] Implicit in all these reasons is that farmers were largely to blame for their problems. Dawson even suggested that in the Peace Country "many fail and most families experience for years a meagre standard of living because of their own unsuitability as settlers...."[25]

Lyle Dick looked at the economic problems of earlier settlement communities and provides an alternative interpretation. Mistaken assumptions by the settlers were certainly a factor in the failure of settlement, but the land policies of the Dominion government and environmental conditions must also been blamed.[26] Dick suggests that free land and railway building encouraged settlement before it became economically viable and the misallocation of resources resulted. Although Vanderhill's work on northern settlement contains an indictment of the farmers' actions, it also blames the Dominion lands administration and the unplanned and undirected settlement patterns for the high level of farm abandonment experienced by northern districts during the 1920s.[27] This interpretation helps clarify the impact of the post-war recession in the Peace Country. The conflict between land policy and landscape intensified the economic crisis and led to the failure of many settlers.

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[22] Canada, Interior Department, *Annual Reports*, 1919, 17.

[23] Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 36.

[24] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 42; Vanderhill, "Settlement of the Forest Lands," 105-6.

[25] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 252.

The demands of the Peace River community, especially the settlements in the Peace River land district, suggest these people believed the land system needed major reforms. As the economy improved, farmers in the Peace River country purchased or rented the abandoned farms, but found the amount of land available for expansion limited.[28] Settlers in the region demanded changes to the land settlement system, but the government policies continued to be developed without input from the Peace River community. The Hudson's Bay Company, for example, became a land holder in the region in 1926. The government had to compensate the HBC for land taken by the Dominion for National Parks and Indian Reserves, and the Peace River country became an important part of the negotiations. The HBC obtained lands in the Peace River country along the forested fringe areas between Grouard and Peace River Crossing and at Saskatoon Mountain, but had little inclination to sell this land cheaply.[29] The local residents sought more fundamental changes to the government land regulations.

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[26] Lyle Dick, "Factors Affecting Prairie Settlement," Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers*, 1974, 21.

[27] Vanderhill, "Settlement of the Forest Lands," 57.

[28] See Chapter 6 for a detailed analysis of farm expansion.

[29] The Hudson's Bay Company originally had no land in Peace Country. It acquired 49,280 acres of land in the Alberta area of the Peace Country -- it could not select areas in the Peace River Block -- as compensation for forest reserves, Indian Reserves and Parks on HBC land in south. The land was not in a single block but existed as scattered pockets throughout the district. H.F. Harmon (HBC Land Commissioner) to W.W. Cory

Indian people had a peripheral role in the new agrarian community, and a proposal from the Municipal District of Peace in 1925 demonstrates the willingness of the settlers to exploit this issue. The Municipal District requested that the government acquire title to one of the segments of Indian Reserve 151 and sell it to farmers. The Cree had retreated from the agricultural zone to trap in the forest, and the M.D. reported that the reserve had been vacant for several years and the few band members remaining had agreed to surrender title. Similar requests came from other areas of the region. The M.D. of Peace continued to press this issue despite government reluctance to participate.[30] When the government finally acted in 1928, it purchased Indian reserves all over the Peace country and then auctioned them in conjunction with school lands in 1929. The prices paid by farmers ranged from eighteen to twenty dollars an acre suggesting that demand for land was high.[31] The Dominion also made changes to the homestead system in 1927 and 1928. These changes in the Dominion Lands Act allowed a farmer to claim a second homestead if he had taken a patent on his original land prior to 1925.[32]

All of these changes provided a pool of land for the expansion of existing farms, but none of them addressed the problems of scattered settlement. New settlers continued to enter the Peace River region, and most of them entered applications for homesteads on the open lands isolated from the existing settlement zones and the railway. In 1924,

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(Deputy Minister of the Interior, May 8, 1926, Cory to Harmon, June 18, 1926, and Cory to Harmon, June 24, 1926. House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1928, No. 107. See also "List of Lands," House of Commons, *Sessional Papers* 1926-27, No. 121.

[30] PAA, M.D. of Peace Papers, Acc. 71.366, file 54, M.D. of Peace to Department of Indian Affairs, July 7, 1925, and *ibid.*, file 50, John Macdonald to C.E. Knowles, November 11, 1926. *Record*, April 6, 1928.

[31] *Record*, May 4, 1928, December 7, 1928, and June 21, 1929. GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 1, "Settlement Problems in the Peace," (1930?).

[32] Martin, *Dominion Lands Policy*, 425. Canada, *Revised Statutes of Canada, 1927*, c. 113, s. 11.

the Minister of the Interior, Charles Stewart, acknowledged the government's inability to control Peace River settlement. He noted settlers were going into districts miles from the railway and squatting on lands not opened for settlement.[33] Studies of pioneer settlement have indicated that distance from a railway was a key element of successful pioneer development,[34] yet it is clear that open lands could draw settlers away from commercial opportunities. The pattern had been created by the characteristics of the landscape and emphasised by government policy. These two factors remained important during this period. The good land in areas such as Berwyn, Grande Prairie, Lake Saskatoon or Beaverlodge had been occupied by 1926. The Municipal District of Peace, for example, even recommended against homesteading in the area. The Municipal treasurer, Eneas Lamont, suggested "[t]he experience in the past has been that it will cost you as much to homestead as it would to purchase."[35]

The continued problem of clearing land was at the heart of this problem. New settlers in the Berwyn-Fairview or Grande Prairie districts had to take homesteads on the forested lands which surrounded these prairies. Indeed, W.D. Albright noted that eighty to eighty-five percent of the Peace country could be described as bush land. Clearing this land consumed both time and capital. Most farmers cleared the land with an axe, piling and burning the brush, and then pulled the stumps using four horse teams. Women and children often participated in this activity. Beulah Baldwin notes her mother, Olive Freeland, used a hatchet to clear small brush, took responsibility for piling the branches, and worked the reins of the horses when pulling stumps.[36] Clearing the brush was merely the first task in transforming bush into field. The roots were removed with a grub hoe, a root harrow, or by dragging a logging chain from the beam of a breaking plough. A reinforced brush breaking plough turned the sod. Roots would continue to emerge for years after the initial breaking.[37] Several farmers contracted neighbours who began to specialise in this activity and developed innovative local technology to deal with the problems.[38] The cost of clearing new land and breaking the soil for crops was variously estimated from $12 to $50 per acre.[39] In a request for provincial financial assistance, J.H. Weber explained his situation to provincial M.L.A. Hugh Allen. In order to clear the brush from his land, Weber needed money and time. The two, however, were virtually impossible to obtain at the same time. To secure capital, Weber had to work off the farm, which reduced the time available to clear land.[40]

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[33] They then demanded services be expanded. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* 1924, 1094.

[34] D.A. MacGibbon, "Economic Factors Affecting the Settlement of the Prairie Provinces," in *Pioneer Settlement*, W.L.G. Joerg, ed., (American Geographical Society, 1932), 35. McGowan, *Grassland Settlers*, 5. J. McDonald, "Soldier and Depression Settlement," *Prairie Forum* 6 (Spring 1981), 45. J.C. Hudson, "A Location Theory for Rural Settlement," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59 (1969), 365-81.

[35] PAA, M.D. of Peace Files, Acc. 71.336, File 40, E.L. Lamont to H.N. Weaver, October 15, 1926, Lamont to M. Leismeister, February 14, 1927, and Lamont to Joseph McCarty, May 2, 1927.

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[36] Beulah Baldwin, *The Long Trail*, (Edmonton: NeWest, 1992), 200.

[37] PABC, Grossman Papers, Add.MSS 104, file 2, p. 41. Grossman pointed out that it took him 18 years to clear 100 acres on his homestead. *Ibid.*, file 1, p. 7. The task of clearing forest was described as "strenuous and back-straining," and required several seasons according to Ellis. "Where Farms Meet Frontiers," *Beaver*, (September 1941), 41. Similar discussions are found in Cecilia Goodenough, "Homesteading in North-West Canada," *The Geographical Journal*, 83, no. 3 (March 1934), 193; R.G. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 68-70, 84; and Luebeck and District Historical Committee, *Our Bend in the Peace*, 35-7. The Director of the Fort Vermilion Experimental Station reported that clearing poplar by hand continued in 1937. NAC, RG 17, B II A, vol. 2849, file 1-38-1, Albert Lawrence to E.S. Archibald, August 11, 1937.

[38] *Record*, May 24, 1918 identified George Kresge, later an important road builder, as an important contractor. For other examples see PABC, R.M. Patterson Papers, Add.MSS 2762, Box 3, file 7, Patterson to Lady Scott, June 21, 1926; Albright, "Timely Hints," in *Record*, July 17, 1931; and David Halldin, "Pioneering in Alberta's Peace River Country," *Swedish American Quarterly*, 49.

[39] House of Commons, *Debates*, 1928, 3848-50 and *Ibid.*, 1929, 2731. Peace River promotional literature claimed land could be broken for $5/acre, but the cost for clearing "varies so greatly that an estimate can hardly be given." *The Peace River Country* (1926), 10. Halldin charged $8/acre just to break land. "Pioneering in the Peace," 49.

Besides the problems with the time and cost of breaking forest land, soil quality was an important consideration. Much of this land had poorly drained grey-wooded soils which were unsuitable for grain growing. Farmers often made an effort to clear land only to find it impossible to produce commercial quantities of wheat or oats. Soil surveys conducted in 1930 and 1931, for example, found that only marginal class two grey-wooded soil lands remained unoccupied in the Falher, Peace River, Berwyn and Fairview areas. At Fort Vermilion prairie, the largest area of clear unoccupied land in the Peace Country, less than nine percent of the area consisted of first class grey-wooded soil zones, and over thirty-five percent was muskeg. The lack of transportation facilities in the area, however, prevented the soil scientists from recommending settlement even on the limited fair soil zones in the Fort Vermilion region. Instead, they continued to advocate settlement on poor lands on the Peavine and Berwyn/Fairview prairies.[41]

The method of clearing land could make this problem even worse. In order to clear land quickly and cheaply, farmers experimented with fire. The fire often scorched the soil, burning the humus, and tended to lead to deterioration of the already poor grey-wooded soils. Using fire to clear the land resulted in a second major problem for Peace River settlers. Wild fires became a fact of life in the Peace River country. During the summer, these clearing fires presented farmers and settlers with a constant threat. Ploughing a fire break around the farm buildings became one of the first projects undertaken on a new farm.[42] Despite the problems caused by fires, the residents of Peace River made repeated demands for permission to use fire to clear the land, and cautiously promoted its illegal usage.[43] One booster pamphlet recommending settlement on the forest lands south of the Peace River reported "some of this land requires a good fire to clear off the small brush."[44] The problems of clearing land and farming the grey-wooded soils left many farmers discouraged and they either tried to relocate or left the region in disillusionment.[45]

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[40] PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 62, Weber to Allen, February 27, 1927.

[41] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 231, Wyatt and Young, "Preliminary Soil Survey Adjacent to the Peace River, Alberta West of Dunvegan." *Ibid.*, F.A. Wyatt to Brownlee, March 9, 1931 and Wyatt to Brownlee, March 16, 1931. B.K. Acton, *A Short Appraisal of the Potential Agricultural Resources of Fort Vermilion*, (Dominion Economics Division, October 1942), copy in GMA, Albright Collection, M8, file 19. The distance from southern markets forced most farmers near Fort Vermilion to abandon their farms in the 1930s. NAC, RG 17, B II A, vol. 2849, file 1-38-3, H.L. Patch to H. Barton, June 29, 1935.

Those settlers without the capital to consider purchasing a farm or clear land were forced on to the fringes as they sought to avoid the costs associated with clearing land. Settlement, consequently, jumped some of the environmental barriers in the period 1928 to 1930. The smaller isolated prairies in the Debolt area on the eastern side of the Smoky River, the Blueberry Mountain region west of Spirit River, the northern and southern sections of the Peace River Block, the Hine's Creek area north-west of Fairview, and especially the Battle River region north of Grimshaw became the focal points of the new expansion.[46] The largest of these areas were east of the Smoky and north of the Peace River, and as a result, the focus of activity during this period shifted from the Grande Prairie to the Peace River land district.

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[42] *Record*, September 28, 1917, August 3, 1922, November 1, 1929, and September 30, 1938. *Journal*, September 24, 1937 and May 2, 1938. PABC, R.M. Patterson Papers, Add.MSS 2762, Box 3, file 6, Patterson to Lady Scott, June 28, 1924; *Ibid*, Box 3, file 7, Patterson to Lady Scott, June 21, 1925; *Ibid*, Box 3, file 5, Patterson to E.G. Fenwick, August 1, 1926; PABC, Grossman Papers, Add.MSS 104, File 2, "Vignettes," 43. PAA, Diary of Unidentified Settler in the Peace Country (Montney, B.C.), 1933-6, Acc. 91.301. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 26, 63.

[43] *Record*, July 2, 1925, November 2, 1928. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* 1929, 2854. *Ibid.*, 1928, 3848-50.

[44] Peace River Board of Trade, *The Peace River Country*, (1926), 9.

[45] PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 65, W.L. Scott (Whitburn) to Allen, August 18, 1930; W.D. Albright, "Timely Hints," in *Block News*, June 19, 1934.

[46] John Imrie, "The Valley of the Peace," *Canadian Geographical Journal* (1931), 468-9, and John Imrie, "Peace River Comes into Its Own," in Imrie, *Peace River*, (1929), 10-14. Battle River had 100 homesteads in 1927, 847 by August 1930. Similarly Debolt had 30 homesteads in 1927, 513 by August 1930. Imrie believed that the population should have increased by 25,000 (a number vastly inflated) and that the

The debate over scattered settlement and the problems of infrastructure development reached the House of Commons. The 1925 Speech from the throne called for increased immigration and colonisation of undeveloped areas such as the Peace country. Some members demanded that settlement be consolidated in southern Canada rather than extend colonisation efforts in the Peace.[47] During the debate over the amendments to the Dominion Lands Act in 1928, both Robert Gardiner and R.B. Bennett raised the spectre of unregulated settlement. Settlement brought immediate demands for schools, roads, postal service and railways. The failure of homesteads, therefore, meant much more than just vacant lands. Under-funded school and road building debentures, and under-utilised postal service and railways all could be traced to failed homesteading.[48] Yet the government made no changes in its lands policy to deal with these concerns.

The government's failure to adapt its land policy to meet the problems of settlement in the Peace country led to a proposal from the region's boosters, promoters, and farmers. W.D. Albright, an early Peace River settler and manager of the Dominion Experimental Station at Beaverlodge, was among those seeking to solve the problem of scattered settlement. He began to argue for planned settlement in 1922, and as early as 1924, he called for a connection between railway development and settlement. He argued that the early settlement of the Grande Prairie district, prior to the arrival of the railway,

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future looked bright.

[47] Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* 1925, 2, 100 and 177.

[48] Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* 1928, 2038-48. A.D. McRae, a Vancouver area Conservative, made a similar criticism in 1929. "[W]hat is even more serious," he noted, "[the settlers] will be beyond the reach of the most modest requirements of rural life." *Ibid*. 1929, 2737. Sensitive to this attack, D.M. Kennedy, the member for Peace River, responded that the settlers in the Peace consisted primarily of experienced agriculturalists who understood the risks of scattered settlement far from the railhead. *Ibid*. 1929, 2854.

had cost both the farmers and the railways. Rather than repeat these problems in the Fort St. John district, the railway should help encourage slow steady expansion of rail line and settlement to avoid inflation and over extension.[49] The local boosters also promoted the land near the railways. The Peace River Board of Trade, for example, emphasised the land available in the Nampa district, and informed the prospective farmer that moving more than 15 miles from a railway was not recommended.[50] Still new settlers entering the Peace Country continued to push into new districts miles from a railway. The problem appeared to be the forest cover.

Albright became concerned with the rapid increase in population in the period 1927-30 and the emerging scattered settlement pattern. The Edmonton newspapers continued to boost the Peace River country and press for increased immigration, and Albright challenged their position. He argued that the system of land occupation had to be modified to overcome the special conditions of the Peace River landscape. Settlers arriving in the Peace country were being forced to settle as far as 100 miles from the railhead (Appendix 3, Map 7, "Limits of Settlement 1929"). Successful northern development, he argued, required land clearing policies in combination with railway branch line construction.[51] Albright's assessment of the situation resonated in the academic studies during the Depression era. According to D.A. MacGibbon, Canada's foremost authority on the grain trade during the period, settlers in the Peace country often found themselves 75 miles from a railway when hauling grain more than 12 miles was considered uneconomic. Under these conditions, little more than a pioneer existence could be achieved.[52] Similarly, R.W. Murchie feared settlement in the Peace River Country because the true economic possibilities did not match the booster's images. Settlement on marginal lands, he argued, would lead to lower economic standards of life and social discontent.[53]

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[49] PAA, Department of Agriculture, Acc. 72.302, file 3096, W.D. Albright, "Handling Alberta's Resources in the Best Interest of All," 1922. NAC, CNR Papers, RG 30, vol. 3059, W.D. Albright to Thornton, February 8, 1924.

[50] Peace River Board of Trade, *The Peace River Country*, (1926), 8-9.

[51] *Record*, February 3, 1928. GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 1, "Settlement Problems in the Peace," (undated (1930?).

By 1928, Albright had become convinced that a new settlement policy had to be implemented. He wrote:

> As the result of fifteen years' [sic] experience and close, thoughtful study of the conditions in a pioneer neighbourhood, I have arrived at the settled conclusion that our free homestead policy has been a gigantic mistake, the only justification for it being that we did not know a better way.[54]

With little guidance in the land policy, settlers were encouraged by railway promoters and civic boosters to move on to marginal lands. Under these conditions few settlers were willing to make a long term commitment to the district. "The urge has been to spread out in all directions to the very limit of endurance, cash in on the native fertility of the soil, make a 'killing' and retire somewhere else to live."[55] The homestead policy he concluded had produced an endurance contest to see who could venture the furthest and chance sticking it out the longest for the reward of increased land values.

The settlement in the Battle River country (Township 89-94, Range 22-24, West of Five) after 1926 provides an excellent example of the problems with isolation and infrastructure development. Roads, bridges, improved mail service and a telegraph were urgently required in this area. Nearly all settlers had to cross the first arm of the Battle River to market their produce or purchase supplies, and without a bridge, crossing was uncertain.[56] Isolation also took its toll socially. Both Monica Storrs and R.M. Patterson encountered women isolated on farms miles from the nearest service centre. They tended the livestock while their husbands worked outside the district. Men too found the isolation difficult.[57]

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[52] D.A. MacGibbon, "Economic Factors Affecting the Settlement of the Prairie Provinces," in *Pioneer Settlement*, W.L.G. Joerg, ed., (American Geographical Association, 1932), 35.

[53] R.W. Murchie, "Agricultural Land Utilisation in Western Canada," in W.L.G. Joerg, ed., *Pioneer Settlement: Co-operative Studies*, (American Geographical Society, 1932), 16-17.

[54] PAA, Department of Agriculture, Acc. 72.302, file 3096, Albright, "Handling Alberta's Resources in the Best Interest of All," prepared for Premier Greenfield in 1922 and revised in 1922, 1928, 1933 and 1936. Since Albright homesteaded near Beaverlodge in 1913, it is reasonable to assume that this comment was first placed in the 1928 draft of this memorandum.

[55] *Ibid.*

The isolation which existed in conjunction with scattered settlement resulted in more than social problems according to Albright. Economically it also created difficulty for bona fide farmers. In scattered settlement areas the co-operative efforts to build roads, operate saw mills and stores, or fight fires became difficult. Moreover, northern settlement required a battle with the forest and the frosts. An independent farmer struggled to clear a small plot of land, but a small clearing in the forest, he argued, acted like a frost well. Only substantial clearing, ditching, and cultivation of the soil eliminated this problem. Rather than allow the problems of isolation and frost to destroy new farm settlements, he called for a concerted government effort to settle the land in waves in conjunction with soil surveys and government-assisted land clearing programs.[58] The government could, he argued, control settlement by auctioning areas it had cleared with fire, axes, and ploughs.

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[56] *Record*, November 30, 1928.

[57] PABC, Patterson Papers, Box 3, file 7, Patterson to Lady Scott, April 30, 1926. Morton, ed., *God's Galloping Girl*, 155, 168-70, 174. Halldin, "Pioneering in the Peace," 44.

[58] PAA, Agriculture, Acc. 72.302, file 3096, Albright to O.S. Longman (Field Crops Commissioner), September 22, 1939 and Albright, "Handling Alberta's Resources." Albright may have reached his conclusions about clearing land and frost based on the experiences on the Battle River prairie. A farmer there noted that in the large cleared area known as the Big Prairie frost conditions were markedly better than in the surrounding wooded areas. GMA, Albright, M8, file 17, E. Diering to Albright, July 28, 1929. Albright continued his campaign for ordered settlement into the 1930s. PAA, Alberta Department of Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.101.2, W.D. Albright, "An Improved Land Settlement Policy." W.D. Albright, "An Economic Land Settlement Policy," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* II (Nov. 1936), 550-555.

The local press echoed Albright's concern with planned settlement. Plans which considered clearing the land as part of the settlement scheme received glowing recommendations.[59] The *Peace River Record*, for example, demanded the government develop a plan to assist settlers with "the most disheartening" cost they faced -- clearing the land, and expressed frustration that up to one third of new homestead filings were cancelled during the 1930 land boom.[60] The *Record* called on the Dominion to cease opening land for settlement in scattered pockets and then leaving the communities to pay for roads, telephones, and schools. Ordered development, the editor claimed, should take precedence over colonisation schemes.[61]

Real change in the land regulations seemed possible following the transfer of resources to the provinces in October 1930. Chester Martin concluded that the Dominion had now distributed the resources, and turned to the provinces for effective management. Rather than settle the land, he argued, the new task for the provincial administrators would be appraising the resources and adjusting the pioneer populations to meet these conditions.[62] Alberta and British Columbia, however, both saw a need to encourage further settlement in the Peace River Country. Hence, following the transfer of lands and resources to the provinces in 1930, Alberta and British Columbia began to experiment with new regulations. For the first time, the settlement in the two provinces would occur under distinctive regulations.[63]

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[59] *Record*, April 19, 1929.

[60] *Record*, November 2, 1928 and April 4, 1930. The editor was thrilled by the continued record rate of homesteading but expressed an ongoing pessimism regarding the Dominion policy.

[61] *Record*, March 1, 1929.

[62] Martin, *Dominion Lands Policy*, 433.

[63] Manitoba and Saskatchewan both ended the homesteading system in favour of purchasing schemes. The importance of settlement in the Peace Country seems to be the reason for maintaining homesteading in Alberta and B.C.. The system of homesteading was restored in Saskatchewan in 1935 as purchasing could not help dried out southern farmers. Burke Vanderhill, "The Settlement of Forest Lands," 118-30; R.W. Murchie,

Albright's enthusiasm for planned settlement had obtained some support in government circles. A.R. Judson, the Provincial Agriculturalist at Grande Prairie, had noted the difficulty of scattered settlement in 1929. "The tendency is to push on to new open areas regardless of distance," he noted. "Unless checked this will, immediately spring opens [sic], result in the rapid filling up of areas far removed from railways, roads, and other facilities." He warned that the Province would, as a result, have to provide an infrastructure to support these new farmers. He concluded "a carefully regulated settlement scheme is sorely needed."[64]

Following the transfer of lands from the Dominion to the provinces, another government figure supported Albright's basic proposals. B.C. sent lands inspector, J.W. Smith, to investigate the Peace River country in the spring of 1934. Smith, like Albright, recommended a new direction in settlement policy.

> Reference has been made to the straggling nature of the settlement that has taken place in the past, and the consequent isolation of settlers, who finding after a while that adequate roads, store facilities, and social amenities of life did not materialize, lost heart. It would appear that a determined effort should be made to prevent in future people from settling in districts so far removed from existing transportation facilities, which makes conveyance of their products to market an economic impossibility, and where the distance from business and social centres prohibits the very necessary constant touch with settled communities.[65]

He suggested that B.C. end all pre-emptions in the area, and divide the Peace River Block into settlement zones. These zones would then be examined by the local old-timers, and an evaluation of their agricultural merits conducted. All settlers outside the prescribed zones would be given an opportunity to exchange their farms for new areas inside the zone. New settlers, to avoid speculation, would obtain land through a purchase

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Agricultural Progress on the Prairie Frontier, 85; and J. McDonald, "Soldier Settlement and Depression Settlement," *Prairie Forum* 6 (Spring 1981), 43.

[64] Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture* (hereafter *Alberta Agriculture Report*), 1929, 61-2.

[65] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, box 126, file 3, Smith to Cathcart, June 25, 1934.

system rather than pre-emption. They would obtain land in 320 acre parcels at a price fixed "according to their agricultural possibilities." Settlers would pay ten percent, and then pay the balance at six percent interest in 15 instalments. It was clear, then that Peace River needed development as much as immigration. The cries for assistance to settlers overshadowed advertising in the booster literature.[66]

Understanding that the opportunity to harmonise land policy and the landscape existed, the Peace River country boosters desired a role in the formulation of the new regulations. Ensuring continued settlement of the region became their primary goal.[67] The 1931 Alberta regulations restricted homesteading to Alberta residents and reduced the residency requirements on the homestead from six to four months per year. This action produced some criticism in Alberta.[68] Not only did the act restrict immigration into Alberta, it also restricted movement within the Peace River region. One settler remarked that several bona fide settlers had taken forested land during the 1929 to 1930 settlement rush because all the good open land had been occupied. Now as settlers in the good area failed, the land act prevented them from moving to this good land.[69]

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[66] *Record*, June 21, 1929 and September 20, 1929.

[67] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 441, Box 328, file 5, p. 8211, Pouce Coupé Chamber of Commerce to Premier Tolmie, February 27, 1930. *Record*, January 3, 1930.

[68] A description of the Alberta system can be found in Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Lands and Mines*, 1931. For criticism of the policy see PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 68, Albright to Allen, February 23, 1931. Albright called the restriction of homesteading to Alberta residents only "provincial and unbecoming." The Alberta-only restriction led to several other letters of complaint. *Ibid.*, Hythe Chamber of Commerce to Allen, February 24, 1931; Wembley Board of Trade to Allen, February 19, 1931; Grande Prairie Board of Trade to Allen, February 23, 1931; and Spirit River Chamber of Commerce to Allen, March 11, 1931. One letter approved. *Ibid.*, Lake Saskatoon UFA to Allen, March 18, 1931. The criticism of the Act extended beyond this one clause. The Editorial in the *Record* claimed that the government had gone to far in its effort to stop uncontrolled immigration. Charles Frederick believed railway development would be stalled and the Peace Country would become a vacation land for southern speculators under the new Alberta regulations. *Record*, February 13, 1931. Opposition politicians such as L.A. Giroux (MLA Grouard) and Charles Stewart argued that the UFA government sought to restrict settlement in hopes of future land sales. *Record*, July 29, 1932.

The Peace River boosters did not object to the change in regulations providing women with an opportunity to homestead in Alberta. Homesteading, of course, had never been restricted entirely to men. Widows with dependent children could, and did file for homesteads. Following the death of her husband, Mrs. Holmes took a homestead in the Lake Saskatoon district. Neighbours assisted in the breaking of land, as they did with all homesteaders, and her fifteen year old son took a job with Revillon Frères to help pay bills.[70] On the whole, however, women who sought to create a farm in the Peace Country had to purchase their land. The new regulations allowed wives and mothers to homestead in the Peace Country and thereby expand the family's holdings. Women quickly took advantage of the new regulations, and the number of women filing for homesteads in the Peace country approached 40% of all applications.[71]

British Columbia meanwhile actively continued the federal government program while collecting information on the settlement problems. The Peace River Block boosters concluded that B.C., consequently, received the destitute and demanded that the government select Peace River settlers more carefully. As the relief rolls increased in the Peace River Block, B.C. ended the pre-emption system on May 16, 1932 and warned squatters that no consideration of improvements would be made.[72] Every adjustment to the changing circumstances seemed to produce a new problem. The closing of homesteading in B.C. produced a rush of land claims, several of which failed in the subsequent years. New settlers, however, could not take up the failed land, and, as a result, several vacant quarter sections of good land existed in the settled districts. To the applause of the local press, B.C. changed its regulations again in 1936 to allow those who could demonstrate an ability to support themselves to claim these abandoned homesteads. B.C. designated two preferred settlement zones, and hinted that any settlers outside the zones would be made ineligible for government services, but never followed up on these policies.[73]

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[69] PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 69, J.G. Taylor (Whitburn) to Allen, June 23, 1931.

[70] PAA, Mrs. Robert Holmes Memoirs, Acc. 64.20.

[71] Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Lands and Mines*, 1930-39.

[72] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 441, Box 328, file 5, p. 8164, J.H. Clarke (Pouce Coupe Chamber of Commerce) to Tolmie, March 14, 1931 (Telegraph). *Block News*, May 10, 1932.

Despite the promising possibilities, neither Alberta nor B.C. dealt with the problems of scattered settlement effectively. The first efforts at planned settlement had been made by the province of Alberta in 1928 when the Alberta Research Council began an analysis of soils in the Peace River country. It "dispelled the wildly optimistic view of the grain-growing capabilities of the northern soils," and more importantly allowed settlers to make rational decisions when selecting lands.[74] The new regulations in Alberta, however, made a limited effort to implement planned settlement. Although W.D. Albright approved of government restrictions on settlement location in the 1931 Alberta Land Act,[75] settlement continued to be dispersed. Despite the concerns about scattered settlement, new farmers continued to settle on the isolated open lands along the fringes of the Peace River Country. The Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Battle River, Hine's Creek, Falher, Debolt and Blueberry Mountain districts were the most popular settlement zones.[76] Moreover, open lands in the three areas accessible by rail -- Falher, Hine's Creek, and Dawson Creek -- were scarce and many settlers were pushing into the areas north and east of Fort St. John.[77] The primary settlement frontier, moreover, shifted from Alberta to British Columbia due to the residency requirements in Alberta's land regulations. Nor did the changes in land administration made by the provincial governments did not statistically improve the homestead system. In Alberta, settlers filed 24,098 homestead entries between 1931 and 1939. During the same period, the Province cancelled 26,611 entries.

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[73] *Block News*, April 10, 1934 and May 15, 1936.

[74] Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 37.

[75] PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 68, Albright to Allen, February 23, 1931.

[76] PAA, NAR Papers, Acc. 86.587, file 657, Canada Colonisation Association, "Colonisation and Land Settlement in the Peace River area of Alberta and British Columbia," 1937.

[77] NAC, CNR Papers, RG 30, Gzowski Files, Volume 7327. L.B. Boyd to W.J. Black, May 30, 1930.

The efforts by Alberta to restrict settlement were not enough for the *Record*, however, which criticised the policy for its failure to restrict settlement.[78] In 1937, the *Record* had chastised the Dominion and Provincial governments for their administration of the settlement process. The editor, Charles Frederick, noted that many new Peace River settlers lived in shacks miles from any facilities or amenities. He argued it would take 20 years for the schools, roads, towns and railways to catch up and provide these settlers with the opportunity to raise their children properly. He called on the government to use relief workers to clear and break land and to build infrastructure prior to opening lands to settlement.[79] The Alberta government system did not call for such an active government role in the settlement process.

This demand for an active government role in settlement resonated in the 1939 District "J" Farmers' Institute (F.I.) of British Columbia demands for a plan similar to Saskatchewan's Northern Settlement Program. Saskatchewan offered farmers assistance with clearing and breaking of forest lands, and assumed responsibility for the construction and maintenance of local market roads. If similar assistance in settlement could be provided, the F.I. argued, "there would not be so many on relief, nor would there be the distress and poverty that is evident on every hand, almost everywhere one happens to travel throughout the entire district."[80] The District "J" F.I. was most interested in the assistance offered for clearing the land. Without such assistance, it concluded, settlement in the Peace country would continue to fail.

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[78] *Record*, April 7, 1939. Rentals would be no easier to collect than taxes.

[79] *Record*, May 21, 1937.

[80] *Block News*, August 17, 1939. See also the reports in *Block News*, August 4, 1938; January 12 and July 20, 1939; July 31, 1941. For a discussion of the Saskatchewan policy see McDonald, "Soldier Settlement and Depression Settlement," 53.

Despite the problems of settlement in the Peace country, settlement in the region remained a priority throughout the depression. The boosters in the Peace country sought to control settlement rather than stop it. "Must We Shut the Door to Development?" asked one editorial.[81] In response to the Saskatchewan government program offering dried out farmers relocation assistance, the B.C. Minister of Agriculture, K.C. Macdonald, called on the federal government to organise settlement into the Peace Country rather than allow these people to move to the coast.[82] The Peace country also saw continued settlement as a key to its future. When Sir Henry Page Croft, the chair of the Imperial Government Research and Overseas Settlement Committee, toured B.C. in search of sites for the family settlement scheme, the *Block News* expressed disappointment that Peace River was not included. The editor, however, did not seek settlement at any cost and rejected any Canadian government financing of the scheme.[83] The problems within the metropolitan settlement plans, nevertheless, led many people to criticise Peace River settlement. W.T. Lucas, UFA Member of Parliament for Camrose, argued that it made no sense to continue new settlement in the Peace River country when a market did not exist for wheat grown in the south.[84]

Scientists at the Alberta Research Council continued to call for soil surveys to precede settlement in the Peace River region throughout the 1930s.[85] The changes finally occurred in Alberta's 1939 homestead-lease arrangement which replaced the old settlement policy. It allowed new farms only on inspected lands which had been deemed suitable for agriculture by the Department. This philosophy allowed the government to restrict settlement into areas where services existed through the inspection process.[86] Settlers, however, did not readily accept the changes in the land regulations. Both of the railway colonisation agencies criticised the 1939 Alberta lease-purchase system. The CPR Colonisation report noted "[t]he system of land lease has not proven as popular with prospective settlers as the old system of homesteading." The CNR report remarked that the major flaw in the program was a demand that 20% of the land be broken in the first year. This task was impossible in the forested Peace River country.[87]

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[81] *Record*, October 15, 1937.

[82] *Block News*, September 17, 1937. The newspaper provided a strong editorial endorsement of Macdonald's position.

[83] *Block News*, July 28, 1938 and February 2, 1939.

[84] Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1930, 767.

[85] E.B. Swindlehurst, *Alberta Agriculture: A Short History*, (Edmonton, 1967), 75-6.

A true effort at planned settlement finally emerged after the Second World War.[88] The Alberta and federal government combined on a new soldier settlement scheme which addressed the Peace River concerns with ordered occupation of the land and clearing the forest. Soldier settlement schemes in the area between Spirit River and Falher had the added value of government assisted clearing programs. Called the Lassiter or Wanham project, this program contracted Lassiter's Limited to clear 100,000 acres of land using brush cutters and caterpillar tractors. All the land was pre-selected for soil quality and designated as soldier's land. Soldiers could then obtain this land through the provincial lease system with federal financial assistance. Lassiter intended to recover the cost of clearing and breaking the land by collecting one-third of the crop grown for seven years.[89]

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[86] Wood, "Alberta Public Land Policy," *Journal of Farm Economics*, 33 (1951), 742. Swindlehurst, *Alberta Agriculture*, 76-7. *Record*, August 4, 1939 also has a thorough description of the regulations.

[87] PAA, NAR Papers, Acc. 86.587, file 399, "CPR Annual Report 1940 Covering Colonisation and Land Settlement Activities in the Peace River Area of Alberta and British Columbia" (hereafter CPR Colonisation Report). "CNR, Department of Colonisation and Agriculture, Land Settlement Activities in Peace River, 1939" (hereafter CNR Colonisation Report) The system's effectiveness remained in question three years later. See "CNR Colonisation Report, 1942."

[88] Alberta, *Report of the Post-War Reconstruction Committee, 1945: Report on Agriculture*, 13.

[89] *Record*, August 3, 1945, September 28, 1945, June 7, 1946, august 9, 1946 and September 13, 1946. PAA, Agriculture, Acc. 72.302, file 39. Especially important are

The Lassiter project, however, proved to be a failure. The costs of clearing and breaking the land bankrupted the company. Lassiter invested over $300,000 in equipment and had nearly $110,000 in operating costs in its first year.[90] Despite this, the company failed to complete the first 11,000 acre block on time. Despite government subsidies, the real income for the project, moreover, would only be generated once the land entered a productive phase. Beginning a farm as a large scale commercial enterprise, furthermore, proved difficult for many of the soldier settlers. The government made continued efforts to keep the project alive, and three more companies received a share of the project. The Deputy Minister of Agriculture, nevertheless, concluded that large scale projects like Wanham were inefficient and unwarranted.[91]

The Wanham project attempted to deal with the issue of soldier settlers. Hundreds of non-soldier settlers continued to take up land in the Peace River country in unplanned settlement following the Second World War. No one considered that settlement should stop after the Second World War. Jack Sissons, the local Member of Parliament, argued that continued settlement was one of the keys to Peace River's future development.[92] Similarly, the Northern Alberta Railway foresaw several new settlement frontiers. The CNR Colonisation Department reported that 2,557,120 acres of the 4,438,400 acres of vacant surveyed land could be settled by mixed farmers. Moreover, over four million

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the letters H. Allam to O.S. Longman, October 8, 1947; Allam to Longman October 17, 1947; and A.K. Olive to J.F. Percival, October 14, 1947.

[90] PAA, Department of Agriculture, Acc. 72.302, Box 1, file 39, Financial Statement of Lassiter's Ltd., April 30, 1947. *Ibid.*, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Wanham Project, November 19, 1947. *Ibid.*, Box 7, Item 318 shows that Mix Brothers and Peter Simonsen firms joined Lassiter in the project.

[91] PAA, Department of Agriculture, Acc. 72.302, Box 7, file 318, Memorandum O.S. Longman to D.A. Ure (Minister of Agriculture), March 23, 1949.

[92] PAA, Charles Plavin Files, Acc. 65.92, Item 41, "Liberal Party Campaign Platform, 1945."

acres of unsurveyed land had agricultural promise.[93] The area between Hine's Creek and Fort St. John and the area north of Grimshaw were especially promising. Settlers also moved into the districts of Rose Prairie and Upper Pine north of Fort St. John. Breaking became simpler in all of these areas due to the use of new modern equipment.[94]

The process of settlement in the Peace River region is thus best understood as a struggle between metropolitan policies and the limitations of the landscape. The Dominion and the Provincial governments, as agents of the metropolitan community, made no effort to adapt the regulatory system to the specific conditions of the Peace River country landscape. The settlers in the Peace began to identify with the conflict. They sought to transform both the metropolitan system and the landscape to meet their commercial objectives. This pioneer identity, however, should not be confused with the regional identity. It became one layer of a regional identity complex. Settlers faced other challenges as they struggled to fulfill the empire image. Creating a prosperous agricultural economy would not be easy and required significant adaptations on behalf of the prospective farmers. This aspect of life in the Peace River region would also affect the regional identity.

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[93] NAC, CNR Papers, RG 30, Gzowski Papers, volume 7327, "Report of the Western Supervisor of Colonisation and Agriculture, October 2, 1944; *Ibid.*, volume 13048, file 2205-9 Part 2, "Future Development - Peace River Alberta," August 5, 1952.

[94] "Peace River Land Boom," *Cariboo and Northwest Digest* 5 (November 1949), 10-13, 38. In B.C., the provincial government rented bulldozers for clearing land. *Block News*, March 26, 1949.

Chapter 5
A Wheat Growing Empire? Agriculture, 1911-46: Environment and Culture

Unjigah. A regional economy had been created along its valley prior to Euro-Canadian settlement. It was an economy adapted to the environment. For thousands of years, Beaver and Cree bands had exploited the wildlife, notably buffalo, deer and moose, and gathered fruits and berries for sustenance. In the years following Alexander Mackenzie's 1792 journey through the region, they had traded furs at posts scattered along Unjigah's banks. Wherever European people lived, they planted small gardens and grew vegetables and even a few coarse grains. The old fur trade economy, however, would be displaced by a new agricultural frontier. Although the Indian peoples, fur traders, and Métis used the natural hay pastures on the plateaux above the river to keep horses and even a few cattle, the new economy quickly marginalised them. The new system maintained its environmental focus. Euro-Canadian settlers entering the region in the twentieth century had to adapt their agricultural outlook to suit the new landscape. In the process of learning how to farm in the Peace River region, another element of the regional identity emerged.

Several historians have studied the commercial agrarian economy, but little agreement exists regarding the impact of settlement, the capitalist ethos, and the environment on agriculture. Building upon the work of James Malin in the 1940s, Donald Worster and Paula Nelson, argued that the capitalist ethos refused to acknowledge ecological limitations to agricultural practice. Capitalism, Malin argued, had been shorn from its roots in the natural world. It had, in Worster's interpretation, become a "malignant growth -- a disease born in but now eating away at the body of the earth."[1]

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[1] Malin, *Grasslands*, 167-8, 335, and 406. Malin, "Mobility and History: Reflections on the Agricultural Policies of the United States in Relation to a Mechanised World," *Agricultural History* 17 (October 1943), 177-91. Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 96-7, and 206. Nelson, *After the West Was Won*, 26-40. For some Canadian work within this interpretation see Don McGowan, *The Green and Growing Years: Swift Current 1907-14*, (Victoria, Cactus Books, 1983) and David Jones, *Empire of Dust*, Chapters 7 and 8.

As a result, western American agriculture with its roots in the capitalist ethos led to environmental degradation and in Worster's classic study, the Dust Bowl. Voisey, on the other hand, highlights the adaptations to local conditions made by the farm community in order to improve profit margins. Rather than destroy the environment, farmers, in his view, modified their agricultural techniques to suit the marketplace and local environmental conditions.[2]

The linkages between settlement, commercial agriculture, and economy in the Peace River country have been discussed in both of the scholarly works on the region. Carl Dawson and R.W. Murchie's 1934 publication *Settlement of the Peace River Country* considered this issue in detail, and Morris Zaslow also devoted considerable attention to the agricultural system in the Peace River country in his 1957 doctoral dissertation, "The Development of the Mackenzie Basin, 1920-1940."[3] Both works concluded that the nature of the regional agrarian economy, with the economic handicaps created by the northern environment and isolated location, preserved the pioneer identity in the Peace Country; both connected Peace River agriculture with the settlers desire to improve their condition of life, but concluded that it would inevitably result in a low standard of living.

The connection between agricultural practice, economy, and regional identity in all of these interpretations is too often framed in terms of success or failure of the agrarian economy. In the Peace River country, the agricultural experience and its impact on regional identity demonstrates the importance of the capitalist ethos. The image created by the promotional literature suggested that the Peace Country would become a commercial wheat producing region similar to the southern prairies, and farmers, agricultural scientists, and metropolitan expansionists made a long term commitment to achieving this goal. Instead, a limited mixed farm economy developed emphasising wheat, forage, and livestock production with significant intra-regional differentiation. The failure to achieve their goal prior to 1950, however, did not lead to a sense of pessimism or failure, nor did it reflect a failure to understand and adapt to environmental conditions. The patterns of Peace River agriculture and economy were produced by the combined impact of settlement process, capitalist ethic, imagery and environment. Peace River farmers and their scientist partners experimented with new agricultural techniques and practices in order to fulfill their vision of a commercial agrarian economy. The constant pattern of change and adaptation, and the distinctive patterns which emerged helped shape the perceptions of the settlement community and inspired a connection with the landscape.

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[2] Voisey, *Vulcan*, Chapter 4 and 5. Voisey, "A Mix-Up over Mixed Farming: The Curious History of the Agricultural Diversification Movement in a Single Crop Area of Southern Alberta," in *Building Beyond the Homestead*, David Jones and Ian MacPherson, eds., (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1985), 179-206. Warren Elofsen, "Adapting to the Frontier Environment: The Ranching Industry in Western Canada, 1881-1914," in Donald Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol. 8 (Gananoque: Langdale Press, 1992), 307-27. Elofsen, "Adapting to the Frontier Environment: Mixed and Dry-Land Farming near Pincher Creek, 1885-1914," *Prairie Forum*, 19 (Spring 1994), 31-50.

[3] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, Chapters 4 and 5. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," Chapter 6. See also Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, Chapter 3 for a summary of the material contained in his dissertation.

As the first settlement wave rolled into the Peace, few prospective farmers understood the significant obstacles they would face in establishing a commercial agricultural economy. The fur traders had experimented with agriculture in the Peace River region since 1788, but almost all of the early plots existed in the Peace valley at Fort Vermilion, Fort Dunvegan or Fort St. John.[4] The first attempts to farm on the plateaux above the river valley occurred after 1882 when two Ontario adventurers ventured on to the plateau above Dunvegan, and John Gough Brick established a farm at Old Wive's Lake in the centre of the Fairview/Berwyn prairie. Grain, however, failed to mature at both of these farms due to frosts. The exploration work by the Geological Survey of Canada and the Dominion Lands Branch, moreover, had not produced any concrete evidence that the region could sustain wheat based agriculture. Despite the lack of conclusive information proving the viability of agriculture in the Peace River region, *Canada's Northlands* and the booster literature which followed had reduced the debate to insignificance at the time of settlement. The prospective settler had little reason to doubt that the Peace River country would be a wheat growing country similar to the southern prairies. The early settlers in the Peace region, however, soon realised that the region had significant environmental limitations for wheat-based agriculture.

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[4] Lamb, ed., *The Journals of Alexander Mackenzie*, 242. Selwyn, "Report," GSC, *Report of Progress, 1875-76*, 48-50. Ogilvie, "1884 Report," 53-5.

The length of the growing season became the most significant climatic consideration for Peace River farmers. Red Fife, the dominant Canadian wheat variety at the beginning of the century, required approximately 115 days to mature for harvest in the dry southern prairies, and sometimes required 130 days during wet cool years.[5] A frost-free period of that duration could not be expected in any section of the Peace River region. The revised edition of the Department of Agriculture publication "Farming in Alberta, Canada," noted that the average frost-free p[illegible] in the Peace River region varied from 105 days at Fairview to 81 days at High Prairie to 65 days at Fort Vermilion.[6] Another publication, *Climate of the Upper Peace River Region*, suggested a farmer could expect an average frost-free period of 101 days at Beaverlodge, but noted the average period free of a "killing frost," in other word -2 degrees C., was 132 days. In 1977, the B.C. Department of Agriculture found that while 110 days of frost-free weather could be expected at Fort St. John, the community of Pouce Coupé averaged only 66 days.[7] Averages are also deceptive. The frost-free period at Beaverlodge varied from 140 days in 1940 to 27 days in 1916. The Department of Agriculture noted that in one year out of ten, the last spring frost occurred on June 11 and the first fall frost August 12. The Department concluded that a 30% chance of frost (10% chance of killing frost) existed in the last week of May and a 80% chance of frost (25% chance of killing frost) before September 15 (a period of approximately 115 days).[8] Despite the intra-regional and year to year variation, it is clear a growing season capable of maturing Red Fife consistently under normal conditions did not exist. Booster literature claimed that the proportionate increase in summer sunlight compensated for the northern area's shorter growing season. New crop varieties with shorter growing seasons, nevertheless, appear to have been more significant.

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[5] A.S. Morton, *The History of Prairie Settlement*, 147-49.

[6] R.E. English, *Farming in Alberta, Canada*, (Department of Agriculture Publication No. 40, revised 1961).

[7] Canada, Department of Agriculture, *Climate of the Upper Peace River Region*, (Publication 1224, 1965), 9. B.C., Department of Agriculture, *Peace River Agriculture*, (Victoria, 1977). The *Record*, September 21, 1922, pointed out that only 77 frost-free days could be expected at that community.

As noted in chapter 4, the development of Marquis wheat helped to overcome this problem. It matured at least a week earlier than Red Fife, produced a higher yield, yet did not sacrifice any of Red Fife's important milling qualities.[9] It is impossible to provide a precise figure for the length of time Marquis needed to mature. The Dominion Agriculture department claimed it required 107 days to reach maturity although studies at the experimental station at Beaverlodge suggested 124 days was a more reasonable figure in that area.[10] Marquis wheat, consequently, did not ensure a frost free harvest in the Peace River country, but did open a window for wheat growing in the region.

Early agriculture thus began under a cloud of uncertainty regarding the length of the frost-free period. This problem, nevertheless, had been considered prior to settlement. Another climatic consideration almost unmentioned in the promotional literature proved significant as well. Just as in the southern prairies, the amount of rainfall received during the growing season caused difficulty for the Peace River agricultural community. Rather than drought, the regular September rains became the source of agricultural problems in the Peace country.

Calculating the average rainfall throughout the season is a difficult task. W.D.

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[8] English, *Farming in Alberta*; and *Climate of the Upper Peace*, Figure 4. The Beaverlodge Experimental Station reported that a significant variation could occur within a mile. C.H Anderson and E.C. Stacey remarked that the temperature near a slough 800 metres from the station averaged 3 degrees C. lower than those at the station. *Soil Management in the Upper Peace*, (Department of Agriculture, Publication No. 985, December 1956), 5.

[9] Morton, *History of Prairie Settlement*, 147-49.

[10] Canada, *Department of Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1932, 77.

Albright kept precipitation records at the Beaverlodge experimental station beginning in 1913 and these constitute the only long term record of rainfall in the district. Rainfall, however, had tremendous regional variability. In 1926, for example, Beaverlodge received 15.58 inches of precipitation compared with 7.52 inches at Dunvegan, 13.06 inches at Fort Vermilion, and 12.04 inches at Peace River.[11] This intra-regional difference is reflected in the recorded rainfall in June of that year. During that month, Beaverlodge received 4.45 inches of rain, Dunvegan 2.2 inches, Fort Vermilion 1.47 inches, and Peace River 4 inches. Generalisations regarding precipitation, consequently, are fraught with difficulty.

Patterns in the recorded rainfall, however, do emerge. The most significant issue was the regular occurrence of heavy September rains and occasional snowfall. Precipitation in the Peace River country was concentrated in the late May to late September period.[12] While September rains are not unusual for most of the arable area in Alberta, when combined with the short growing season, the fall rains proved to be a significant problem in the Peace country. Seeding usually occurred in early May, and thus cutting could, at the earliest, occur in late August and threshing in September. The fall rains resulted in a further delay in harvest until the mid-October period with the increased risk of frost damage and the frequent problems of bleaching grain.

W.D. Albright kept an ongoing record of harvest and crop conditions from 1913 to 1941.[13] It demonstrates in remarkable form the tumultuous record of Peace River agriculture. Frosts and or snow during June, July, or August damaged the crops in extensive sections of the Peace River country in 1916, 1918, 1926, 1933, 1935, and

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[11] Alberta, *Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Agriculture* (Hereafter *Agriculture: Annual Report*), 1926 (Edmonton, 1927), 128-9.

[12] *Climate of the Upper Peace River Region*, 13-14. For an illustration of the overall climate patterns in Alberta and the ability to make comparisons between the Peace River area and other sections of the Province see Richard Longley, *Climate Maps for Alberta*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1968).

[13] GMA, Albright Papers, M8 file 8, Albright Speech to Sudeten Germans, Nov. 1941, 12-25.

1937. In some limited areas, Albright noted that 10 consecutive years of frost had damaged crops.[14] Harvest was substantially delayed in September by rains or snowfall, "the ruling tendency in this Northern climate," in 1913, 1915, 1916, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1924, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1939, and 1941; in other words, in 17 of the 28 years Albright had recorded the crop growing conditions in the region. Indeed, Albright noted that harvesting was completed in the snow, often as late as December, in the early settlement years of 1913, 1916, 1919, and 1920.[15] This experience was repeated in 1933 in some locales.[16] Only 1914, 1922, 1923, 1925, 1932, 1938, and 1940 could be considered very good harvest years in his record of Peace River agricultural conditions. Even the bumper crop of 1927 which helped inspire the third settlement wave into the Peace faced the problem of reduced quality due to excessive rainfall in September and October.

Besides climatic considerations, agricultural development in the Peace River Country had to consider soil conditions. Three main soil types existed in the Peace River region. In the prairie sections, most notably the Grande Prairie, the Fairview/Berwyn prairie, and the Spirit River prairie, transitional or degraded Black soils predominated. These soils contained high nutrient value and represented the best soils in the region. Surrounding these prairie areas, the land covered in light brush and scrub consisted of Grey-Wooded Transitional soils. This land had a thinner layer of top-soil and a lower nutrient content. The remainder of the land in the Peace River country, nearly 80% of the total area, had Grey-Wooded soils. Formed under the forest, these soils had a thin top-soil, lacked nutrients, notably nitrogen, and, because they were formed from decaying pine needles and leaves, were acidic.[17] Although many of the soil management techniques used in southern agriculture could be adapted to the degraded Black soil zone, new methods would be needed to farm the grey-wooded soils. Few farmers understood this problem.

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[14] Albright made this comment with regard to the Hine's Creek area. See *Block News*, November 26, 1937.

[15] In the Lake Cardinal area of the Berwyn/Fairview prairie, threshing of the 1919 crop continued into January. *Record*, January 2, 1920.

[16] In the North Peace, many farmers failed to harvest the 1933 crop until the spring of 1934. *Record*, October 27, 1933, May 18, 1934. PAA, "Diary of a Settler (Montney, B.C.?), Acc. 91.301 recorded threshing on February 9, 1934.

Map 7, "Generalised Soil Classification in the Peace Country, Alberta," (See Appendix 3) based upon the research of the Canada Land Inventory (CLI), clearly demonstrates that soil conditions in the Peace River Country would restrict and influence agriculture. The CLI classification system, rather than a soil survey for type and quality, estimates the soil capability for agriculture based upon research data, observations, and experience. The first three classes of soils in this system "are considered capable of sustained production of common cultivated crops, the fourth is marginal for sustained arable culture," and other classes cannot support cultivation.[18] For historical purposes, the classifications must be considered generous since they assume "good soil management practices that are feasible and practical under a largely mechanized system of agriculture," where feasible and practical imply that it is within present day economic possibility of the farmer to make improvements.[19] Furthermore, soil management and reclamation projects could change the soil classification. Thus soil with poor characteristics at the time of settlement could be improved with proper farm practices. Even under such a generous system, the restricted area of good agricultural soil is apparent in the map.

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[17] F.A. Wyatt and J.D. Newton, *Wooded Soils and Their Management*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 21 (March 1932). Anderson and Stacey, *Soil Management*, 5-6.

[18] Environment Canada, *The Canada Land Inventory, Volume 2: Soil Capability Classification for Agriculture* (Information Canada, 1972), 3. For more information on the classification system see also, Environment Canada, *Land Capability for Agriculture: Canada Land Inventory Preliminary Report*, (Minister of Supply and Services, 1978). Class 5 soils are categorised as agricultural by the CLI, but their limitations make them unavailable for "sustained production of annual field crops." A Canada West Foundation task force characterised the soil zones as: Class 1, excellent; Class 2, good; Class 3, fair: Class 4, marginal; Class 5, pasture only. *Western Canadian Agriculture to 1990*, (Calgary: Canada West Foundation, 1980), 26.

[19] *Canada Land Inventory*, 5.

The Peace River region contained no soil in class 1. This is not unusual for the prairie provinces. The CLI considered only 1.95 million of the 49.42 million acres of arable land in Alberta (generously considered classes 1 to 4 inclusive) as class 1 soil.[20] The region, nevertheless, did contain limited areas considered class 2. The major settlement islands in the Grande Prairie, the Fairview/Berwyn prairie, the Spirit River prairie, the Battle River prairie, and the Falher region all fall into this classification. Comparing Map 7 with the "Limits of Settlement" maps, the similarity of the patterns becomes apparent. Still, the CLI survey makes it clear that the agricultural soils in the Peace River area were limited. Indeed, by 1929 most of the class 2 soil areas were occupied and new farms had pushed into the class 3 soil zones. The post 1929 settlement frontier existed entirely in the class 3 and marginal class 4 soil zones. These grey-wooded soils would require meaningful agricultural adaptation.

Peace River farmers faced one other distinctive environmental challenge in their efforts to establish commercial agriculture. The geological structure of the Peace River basin made water supply a significant issue in several sections of the region. The Grande Prairie and High Prairie areas had the best water supplies. In the Grande Prairie country, small lakes provided an excellent supply of surface water, and water from wells could be obtained. In other areas, the Smoky River and Fort St. John shale formations, and the underlying Dunvegan and Peace River formations which led many to suspect that oil production might be possible in the Peace country, made obtaining water difficult. Farmers on the Berwyn/Fairview prairie, the Spirit River prairie, the Falher prairie, and the Fort St. John district, had significant difficulty obtaining an adequate water supply.[21] The streams and creeks in these areas run in deep gorges making easy access for water collection difficult. The run-off, furthermore, was variable and unpredictable for damming and storage. Dug and bored wells could not reach adequate depth to obtain a water supply.[22] Only drilled wells of 400-600 feet or more reached a useable, though often undrinkable, water source.

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[20] Environment Canada, *Canada Land Inventory: Preliminary Report* No. 10, (Ottawa, 1976), 21. *Western Canadian Agriculture to 1990*, Table 5-2, 26.

[21] Ralph Rutherford, *Geology and Water Resources in parts of the Grande Prairie and Peace River districts, Alberta*, (Edmonton: Research Council of Alberta, 1930), 36.

Care must be taken not to suggest that climate, geological, and soil conditions meant agriculture in the Peace River region should not have been attempted. The limited nature of good agricultural land in Canada generally helps explain why agriculture experimentation occurred in the Peace River country despite the regional limitations. The CLI discovered that only 5% of Canada's soil fell into classes 1-3 and that less than 10.3% of Canada's land could support economically viable agricultural production.[23] Under these conditions, the availability of limited amounts of class 2 and class 3 land in the Peace River region becomes significant. Settlement prior to 1911, moreover, had occupied all areas of the southern prairies where good agricultural soils existed. The distinctive Peace River environment, nevertheless, influenced the agricultural patterns and prosperity of the regional farm community. Successful farming depended upon the willingness and ability of farmers to adjust their perceptions to the conditions.

Describing the farms and the pattern of agriculture which emerged in the Peace River country environment is a difficult, if not impossible, task. The size of the region and the number of farms it contained suggests that variation would be the rule. The smallest breakdown of information provided by the published census returns often includes comprehensive results from hundreds of farms. These published returns cannot answer questions regarding the relationships between such factors as: farm size and crop selection or mechanisation; ethnicity and grain or livestock production; or length of occupation and revenue. A good sample of farmers in the region was made by the Canadian Pioneer Problems Committee in 1930, but their work does not help explain patterns which emerged in the Depression and World War 2.[24] Despite these limitations, some generalised patterns of activity can be outlined. Furthermore, the patterns themselves, because they were shared in a broad sense, help to explain the regional identity in the Peace River region.

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[22] Care must be taken not to generalise for these areas. In the Spirit River prairie for example, a few shallow dug wells in the vicinity of the town of Spirit River produced an adequate water supply. At the town of Spirit River itself, however, wells drilled 575 feet could not produce good domestic water. Similarly, water supply in the Berwyn area is adequate while at Fairview deep drilled wells produce a poor supply. *Ibid.*, 37-46.

[23] This includes soil classes 1 to 5. *Land Capability for Agriculture*, 1.

Farming was the dominant economic activity for both men and women in the Peace River Country. Approximately 73% of the male Peace River workforce claimed agriculture as their occupation in the 1941 census.[25] The male participation rate varied from a low of 63% in Census Division 15 to a high of 80% in Census Division 16. The next largest occupation groups listed by the 1941 Census, services, trade and finance, manufacturing, and transportation and communication, each employed approximately 4% of the male workforce. The female participation rate in agriculture was relatively stable throughout the entire region at 10% of the female workforce. Clerical workers at 5% were the only occupational group to compare with agriculture for women. According to the Census, employed women accounted for only 11.5% of the women over the age of fourteen. The Census, of course, vastly undervalued female participation in the workforce, especially on the farm. Farm wives like Ida Scharf Hopkins often maintained the farm while their husbands sought off-farm employment, trapped in the forest, or ran a small sawmill.[26] This role only serves to emphasise the importance of farming for women in the region. It is obvious that agriculture was the single most important occupation for both men and women in the Peace country.

After clearing and breaking the land, selecting a crop was the most important stage of agricultural development. Would farmers grow wheat on all the available land, or would they diversify into other grains? Was the region better suited to ranching than grain production? Would a mixed economy including grains, hay and livestock be a preferable system? These questions required immediate consideration. The decisions made by Peace River farmers, and the eventual agricultural patterns demonstrate the interplay of imagery, capitalist ethos, and environment.

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[24] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, Chapter 4 and 5. The survey, as will be seen, also captured an image of Peace River agriculture at a moment in time which may have been a distortion of the long term pattern.

[25] *Census of Canada*, 1941, Vol. 7, Table 11, 320.

[26] Ida Scharf Hopkins, *To The Peace River Country and On*, (n.p., 1973), 97-100.

The prairie image of wheat empire and farmers' previous economic success with that crop made wheat the most important field crop in the region. The settlers grew this crop and shipped it to market from the earliest stages of settlement. The Edmonton Dunvegan and British Columbia railway reached McLennan in 1915, and that same year farmers, led by H.L. Propst, organised a 20 car train of grain including wheat for shipment.[27] Many farmers raised wheat for cash export before a railway arrived in their area. The Waterhole Trading Company, for example, purchased grain in the Fairview area and sent it to railhead at Peace River by scow in 1916.[28] Other settlers in the Pouce Coupé and Battle River regions transported grain over 100 km to Spirit River and Grimshaw respectively following settlement.[29]

Wheat growing, however, never dominated agriculture in the Peace River region in a pattern similar to Vulcan or Abernethy.[30] While wheat accounted for approximately three quarters of all field crop production in the Vulcan area within five years of settlement, in Census Division 16 it never accounted for more than two thirds of seeded acreage, and in Census Division 15 it was even less important (Figure 5-2). At the peak of their dependence upon wheat, Peace River farmers in Census Division 15 and 16 seeded wheat on 400,000 acres or less than 50% of the cultivated land (Figure 5-1).[31] Except for those few years in the period 1926-1931, spring wheat production occurred on approximately 30% of the available land. Farmers in the Peace Country, therefore, never practised the phenomenon known as wheat mining. The different pattern of wheat production in the Peace River region reflected the need for adaptation and change to meet

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[27] Propst suggested that the local board of trade put a banner on the car announcing the first load of Peace River wheat. *Record*, February 18, March 4, March 11, November 19, 1915, January 14, and May 26, 1916.

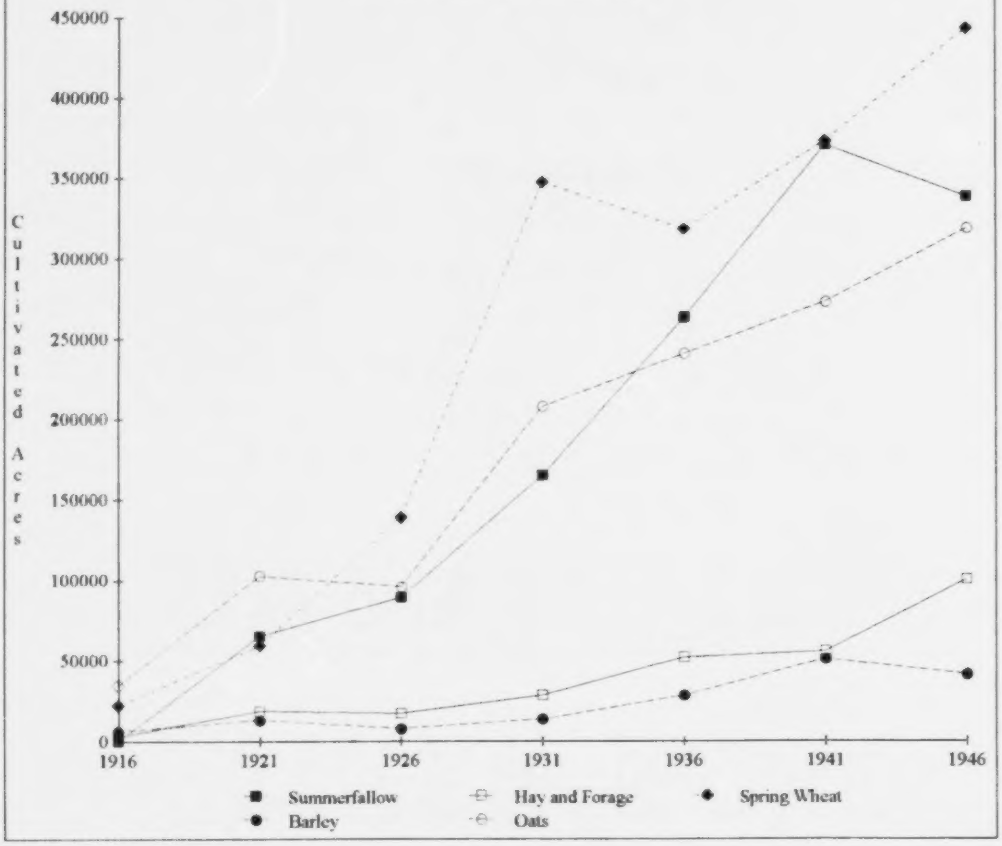
[28] *Record*, May 26, 1916.

[29] Farmers in these areas shipped grain with sleighs, river steamers, and, later, trucks. Somewhere between 350 and 600 teams shipped grain from Pouce Coupé prairie to Spirit River at the peak of shipping season. Harry Giles, "Early Days in the Peace River," *Northwest Digest* 8 (April 1952), 17; E.A. Keith, "Early Transportation in the Peace River Country," *Northwest Digest* 10 (May-June 1954), 23. Another farmer in Pouce Coupé shipped 5000 bushels of grain to Spirit River because the local market could not consume production. NAC, RG 43, vol. 497, file 14635, James McMullen to C.A. Dunning, April 5, 1926. Other B.C. area farmers used steamers along the Peace River to ship grain. *Record*, November 4, 1926, June 28 and July 19, 1929. In the Battle River section the first shipment of wheat for market occurred in 1928 and farmers in the area seeded wheat for export and then hauled the grain to market by truck during the 1930s. *Record*, October, 19, 1928, October 9, 1931, May 18, 1934 and *Northern Gazette*, October 25, 1935.

[30] Voisey, *Vulcan*, 83-4. Dick, *Farmers "Making Good,"* 71.

Figure 5-1

Cultivated Land in Census Div. 15 & 16



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[31] Appendix 2, Table 1 contains the raw census data for Census Division 15 and 16.

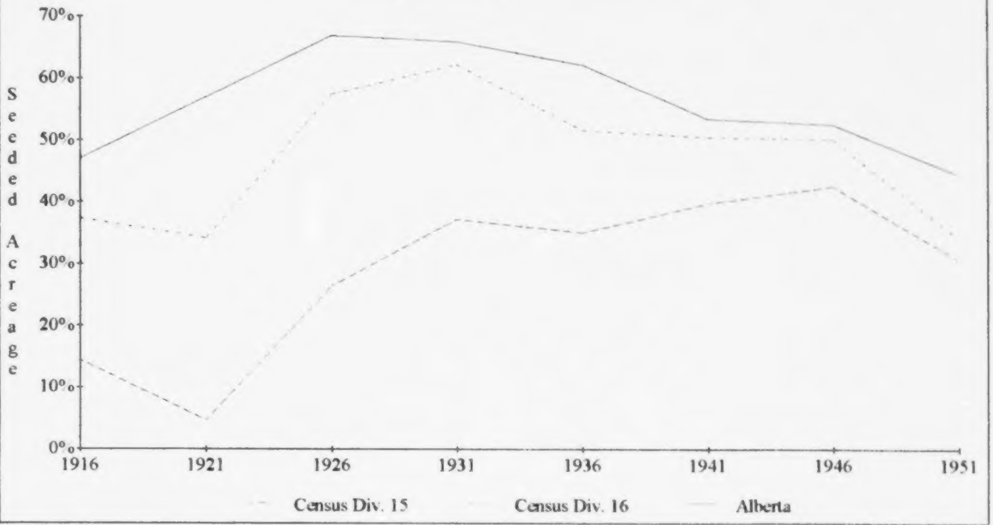

Figure 5-2

Acreage Devoted to Wheat Production

environmental conditions. Furthermore, it reflected the relationship of Peace River agrarian development with economic changes and market conditions.

The pattern of wheat production in the Peace River country is clearly related to the marketing of wheat and the financial returns it generated. Wheat production increased in the 1920s because it offered the best possible returns to the farmer despite low prices and high transportation costs. Indeed, the transportation costs from the Peace River country made shipping coarse grains, with their lower market value, virtually impossible. Farmers were not satisfied with the return on their production, however. They could do little about the price paid on international markets, but they protested the freight charges from the Peace River country vigorously. Their campaign was rewarded in 1925 with a general freight rate reduction.[32] Boosters in the region could claim that shipping grain from Peace River to Vancouver was cheaper than from Great Falls, Montana to

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[32] For examples of the complaints about freight rates, see *Record*, April 19 and April 26, 1923 and *Herald*, November 27, 1923. Zaslow noted that the cost of shipping grain from Grande Prairie to Fort William declined from 39.6 cents/bushel in 1920 to 16.8 cents/bushel in 1925. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie Basin," 69. See also Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 44.

Chicago.[33] At the same time as the charges to transport grain decreased, the price of wheat increased.[34]

The combination of higher prices and lower transportation costs helps to explain the continued increase in seeded acres between 1926 and 1931 despite the arrival of large numbers of new settlers and a substantial increase in farm acreage. The proportion of seeded acres devoted to growing wheat, however, peaked in the first years of the Depression at approximately 50% of the seeded land in Census Division 16, and declined marginally until the end of World War Two despite market fluctuations. Following the war, wheat acreage declined substantially throughout the region. In Census Division 16 wheat acreage never reached the Alberta average throughout the period, and in Census Division 15 it never reached one-third of total acreage. Hence, the pattern of wheat production is more complex than simply a reaction to prices.

Growing wheat in the Peace River country required adaptations to meet the environmental conditions in the region. The farmers drew upon the scientific community to overcome the climatic challenges to wheat growing. Most important in this regard were the activities at the Dominion Experimental Substation at Beaverlodge.[35] Although he was not a Dominion scientist, W.D. Albright, the station manager, became a trusted source of information. He published a regular column in the local newspapers called "Timely Hints," conducted meetings and seminars throughout the region, and later broadcast a regular lecture on CFGP radio in Grande Prairie. Albright's efforts proved incredibly popular, and the station was regarded as an important regional asset. Farmers in the region resisted any efforts to close the station or reduce its activities.[36] Encouraged by Albright, farmers formed agricultural societies and attended meetings with Albright, provincial agriculturalists and other agricultural scientists. They did not simply accept the advice of experts, however. They sought guidance from the scientific community, but relied upon their own business experience to make the final decisions.

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[33] *Grimshaw District, Peace Municipality, and the Battle River Prairie*, (1928).

[34] *Record*, January 29, 1925.

[35] For a brief history of the station see GMA, Loggie Collection, M 4560, file 2, "THE DOMINION EXPERIMENTAL SUBSTATION, Beaverlodge, Alberta., 1929." Another interesting source is E.C. Stacey, *W.D. Albright* (Beaverlodge: Beaverlodge Historical Society, 1974).

Peace River farmers experimented with new grain varieties in search of an early maturing and marketable wheat to overcome the climatic problems. Marquis had serious disadvantages for the Peace River region. Not only did it fail to mature properly in the region, it also graded poorly. Appearance was one of the primary diagnostic tools for assigning grades under the Canada Grain Act (1912). When rained upon after maturity, Marquis wheat lost its amber colour so essential to the Number 1 Northern grade. Moreover, wheat had to be threshed with a moisture content below 14.5% to ensure proper storage. The fall rainfall in the Peace River country, consequently, meant that tough or even damp, bleached wheat became the norm. Under these conditions, Number 3 and Number 4 Northern or even "Feed" became common grades for the Peace River wheat crop.

As early as 1919, farmers in the Peace River country expressed an interest in wheat varieties other than Marquis. Both Early Triumph (Red Bobs) and Ruby were popular choices amongst Peace River farmers.[37] Both matured earlier than Marquis, but had significant drawbacks. Ruby, although a high quality milling wheat, shattered easily and had a greatly reduced yield. Early Triumph offered a slight advantage over Marquis in terms of early maturity and yield, but had a disadvantage in terms of milling quality. In the mid-1920s, two new wheat varieties came to the forefront of Peace River agriculture. The introduction of Garnet and Reward meant a radical transition in Peace River agriculture. Both varieties matured earlier than Marquis, but had few other common characteristics. The two varieties were remarkable for their differences.

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[36] When the government reduced its financial commitment to the station and Albright could not produce his newspaper column, widespread protest occurred throughout both the Alberta and B.C. sections of the Peace Country. See for example NAC, RG 17, B.II.A., vol. 2849, file 1-40-1 part 1, J.A. Fraser (M.P. Cariboo) to Minister of Agriculture, April 5, 1933. *Ibid.*, C.W. Clement (Associated Peace River Boards of Trade) to Minister of Agriculture, July 6, 1933. W.D. Albright noted that he addressed over 70 local meetings between March 31, 1931 and March 31, 1932. Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1932, 79. For just two examples of farmer response to a visit by Albright see *Record*, July 17, 1931 and *Block News*, July 24, 1936.

[37] NAC, RG 17. vol. 3885, W.D. Albright to Chas. Saunders (Dominion Cerealist), January 7, 1919. *Record*, April 5, 1923. Ruby was a cross between Red Fife and Riga first produced in 1905. Red Bobs was produced by an accidental cross between White Bobs and possibly Marquis. W.D. Albright, "The Romance of Wheat," in *Record*,

Garnet distribution began in 1926. Bred from Ladoga, Red Fife and Riga, it matured at least 4 days earlier than Marquis -- farmers claimed from 7 to 10 days earlier -- and produced comparable yields.[38] A.R. Judson, the Grande Prairie district agriculturalist, acknowledged the tremendous benefits provided by Garnet. "The season [1928] was one that clearly demonstrated the value of early maturing varieties of wheat," he wrote. "Had these areas this season been limited to Marquis wheat ... a particularly small percentage would have reached contract grades."[39] The creamy, rather than white, colour of Garnet's flour appeared to be its only draw-back. Despite this early concern about its milling characteristics, the Dominion Department of Agriculture concluded in 1927 that Garnet "is a variety which merits consideration in those districts where conditions [meaning more particularly late sowing and early frosts] are inimical to the

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October 20, 1933.

[38] This is a simplified description of the complex breeding process which led to Garnet. See Morton, *History of Prairie Settlement*, 149-53. Farmers often claimed that the difference in the time of maturity was much greater than shown by the experimental stations. See NAC, RG 17, Vol. 3983, W.D. Albright to Dr. Newman, December 20, 1937. By 1933, Albright claimed that Garnet was 10 days earlier than Marquis. GMA, Albright Papers, M8, File 1, "Breeding a Wheat for the North," Unpublished Article, 1933. A lengthy article by W.D. Albright entitled "The Romance of Wheat," outlined the breeding history of several varieties of wheat including Garnet and Reward. *Record*, October 20, 1933.

[39] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1928, 60.

proper development of Marquis."[40]

Reward distribution began in 1928. Bred from Prelude and Red Fife, it matured 1 to 5 days earlier than Marquis, and only 1 to 3 days later than Garnet.[41] It offered an improvement in milling quality over Garnet and Marquis, but had significantly lower yields than either. By 1931, scientific experts recommended Reward over all other wheat varieties for agriculture in northern regions.[42] Garnet, nevertheless, became the dominant wheat variety in the Peace River country, much to the chagrin of agricultural experts like W.D. Albright.

The confusion over wheat varieties, and the farmers' choice of Garnet over Marquis and Reward is an excellent example of the divergence of the three concepts of identity: metropolis, environment, and perception. The metropolitan concern with international markets led to the major critique of Garnet. Canadian wheat had developed a market niche based upon the milling qualities of Marquis. The bright white flour, high protein levels, and high gluten content of Marquis made it a perfect wheat to blend into the softer European varieties and thus improve the quality of bread. Garnet lacked these qualities; Reward grown in the North exceeded Marquis in all categories. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture heard concerns regarding the quality of Garnet as early as 1929.[43] Fear of losing the European market had led the government to remove Garnet from the highest grade of wheat by 1932 and to recommend a separate grading system.[44] Garnet, however, continued to be allowed as Canada No. 2 and No. 3 Northern, and elevators sometimes mixed Garnet into the highest grade.[45]

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[40] Quoted in Morton, *The History of Prairie Settlement*, 150. Political interference from the Minister of Agriculture, W.R. Motherwell, led the Department to publish this positive statement. See Jim Blanchard, "The Garnet Wheat Controversy, 1923-38," *Manitoba History*, (Spring 1990), 12-22.

[41] Morton, *History of Prairie Settlement*, 149-53. Albright noted it was about one week earlier than Marquis, but three days later than Garnet. *Record*, October 20, 1933. The Alberta district agriculturalist A.R. Judson was not as kind. He stated Reward was neither as early, nor as high a yielder as Garnet. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1929.

[42] Morton, *The History of Prairie Settlement*, 153. NAC, RG 17, B.II.A., v. 2849, file 1-40-1, part 1, W.D. Albright to W.R. Motherwell, December 7, 1929. *Record*, October 16, 1931.

[43] Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 296.

Garnet, in spite of its grading liability and metropolitan concerns, became the wheat of choice in the Peace River region, and not coincidentally, the second settlement wave in the Peace River country occurred following its introduction. Farmers continued to grow Garnet despite increasing scientific criticism because it offered substantial advantages over Marquis, Red Bobs, and Reward. Most important for the farmers, Garnet, unlike Marquis and Red Bobs, resisted bleaching in the September rains.[46] Since grading grain occurred primarily on the basis of colour, Garnet's ability to hold its amber shade became an important point. Although excluded from the highest grade of wheat, Garnet rarely graded below Number 3 Northern. When combined with its consistent high yields, Garnet provided a steady income level when compared with other wheat varieties.

Although it yielded consistently lighter than Garnet, Reward appeared to have several advantages for the farmer as well. It matured early, had the stiff-strawed quality of Marquis, resisted shattering, resisted bleaching (although not as well as Garnet), and produced high quality milling wheat. Reward, nevertheless, had significant problems not recognised by the Dominion scientists. First, the commercially available seed supply lacked genetic purity, and consequently, farmers could not rely upon a consistent crop quality and often discovered uneven maturity. The presence of green kernels in Reward samples often reduced the grade.[47] Second, and more important, Reward was susceptible to smut and other fungus diseases.[48] Smut led to shattering and the deterioration of the wheat, reduced yields, and lower grades. The spores of loose smut, furthermore, travelled in the wind and thus could contaminate other fields. Smut also proved difficult and dangerous to combat. The methods of treating seeds for stinking smut involved dusting the seeds with organic mercury, dusting them with the less effective and less poisonous copper carbonate dust, or washing the seed in formaldehyde. In the case of loose smut, washing the seed in a precisely temperature controlled hot water solution was the only control method.[49] This exposed the farmer to dangerous chemicals and involved an extra, time-consuming step in an area where the timing of seeding was essential. The combination of poor seed, smut, and modest bleaching reduced the quality of Reward harvested in the Peace country, and it usually graded below Garnet. Although Reward, if properly cared for, produced a better quality wheat than Garnet, it lacked Garnet's consistency. Farmers in the Peace River country sought financial success and continued to grow Garnet as it provided better income despite its milling limitations.

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[44] Garnet's limited milling qualities prevented it from being graded No. 1 Northern under the Canada Grain Act. See NAC, RG 80, vol. 9, file T-14-53, W.R. Motherwell to Leslie Boyd (Chair of the Board of Grain Commissioners), November 28. 1928. As a result, Garnet was marketed as No. 2 Northern or worse. The complaints about Garnet continued throughout the early 1930s. *Ibid.*, E.D. Ramsey to H.H. Stevens, January 20, 1932; *Ibid.*, E.D. Ramsey to J.G. Parmalee (Deputy Min., Trade and Commerce), June 7, 1932; *Ibid.*, file T-14-54, H.M. Tory to H.H. Stevens, March 13, 1934. Zaslow noted that in 1932, Garnet accounted for three quarters of the No. 2 wheat at Vancouver, the port used by Northern Alberta farmers. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 332. This led European grain buyers to complain about Canada No. 2 and No. 3 Northern grades due to Garnet admixture.

[45] PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 70, Hugh Allen to D.M. Kennedy, May 31, 1934.

[46] Red Bobs was also prone to a disease known as piebald when exposed to wet fall conditions. NAC, RG 80, v. 9, file T-14-54. L.H. Newman, *The Best Varieties of Grain. Record*, March 10, 1927.

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[47] PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 70, Allen to Kennedy, May 31, 1934.

[48] Albright believed that loose smut occurred due to an early contamination of the seed supply and could be easily remedied. Reward did prove susceptible to stinking smut, however. For his defence of Reward and the belief that loose smut was not a problem see *Record*, October 16, 1931, and October 20, 1932. Alberta agriculturalist A.R. Judson argued Reward suffered from loose smut. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1929.

[49] A.W. Henry, *Stinking Smut of Wheat in Alberta*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Circular No. 10 (April 1931). W.F. Hanna and W. Popp, *The Production of Smut-Free Seed*, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Publication No. 490 (March 1936). A.W. Henry, *Treatment of Seed Grain*, University of Alberta, Circular No. 5 (April 1939). W.J. Cherwick, *Smut Diseases of Cultivated Plants in Canada*, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Publication No. 887 (August 1953). Don Wetherell, *Mixed Farmyards in Alberta, 1895-1955*, (Alberta: Reynolds-Alberta Museum, 1984), 110-113.

Booster campaigns in the late 1920s also convinced farmers to increase their wheat acreage, although they failed to recognise the struggle by Peace River farmers to find a suitable wheat variety. The boosters focused on the excellent crop growing and harvest conditions in 1926, the record yields in 1927, and the award winning efforts of Herman Trelle of Wembley. Trelle won the Grand Championship in spring wheat at Chicago in 1926, and together with Lloyd Rigby, Justyn Rigby, and Jack Allsop from the near vicinity won several "Wheat King" titles at the Chicago or Toronto grain shows between 1926 and 1940.[50] The award winning efforts of these farmers were used as symbols by the booster community to promote the agricultural characteristics of their region. Garnet wheat, the wheat of choice in the Peace River region, played no role in any of these victories, however. Indeed, all the award winning samples were Marquis wheat grown from seed supplied by W.D. Albright from the Beaverlodge Experimental Station. The publicity given to these award winning wheat exhibits and the large wheat crops grown during the same years, nevertheless, encouraged Peace River farmers to shift more of their available acreage to wheat production.

Improved prices, lower transportation costs, new early maturing wheat varieties, boosterism, and successful harvests led to substantially increased wheat acreage in the period 1927-31. Farmers in Census Divisions 15 and 16 seeded wheat on: 106,506 acres in 1925; 139,107 acres in 1926; 138,800 acres in 1927; 226,984 acres in 1928; 327,000 acres in 1929; 305,000 acres in 1930; and 346,000 in 1931 (See Figure 5-1).[51] The shift to wheat, however, proved to be short lived. Several factors led to the remarkable reduction in wheat production during the 1930s. The decline in the price of wheat during the Depression is the most obvious influence on crop patterns. The Department of Agriculture estimated that wheat cost $0.69 per bushel to produce.[52] In the period 1930-35, farmers received less than this for No. 1 Northern once freight rates were deducted. Marketing conditions alone, however, do not explain the farmers shift away from wheat. The early decline in prices had been considered temporary, yet wheat acreage was reduced substantially, and never recovered to the peak it reached in 1931. The continued environmental adaptation by Peace River farmers must be considered.

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[50] E.B. Swindlehurst, *Alberta Agriculture: A Short History*, (Edmonton: Department of Agriculture, 1967), 73. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 273. *Record*, December 2, 1926.

[51] The total seeded acreage in 1927 and 1928 were reported by the Alberta Agriculture statistics branch. The totals in 1930 and 1931 were reported in the Census. The 1929 acreage is only an estimate from the district agriculturalists and is probably too high. Using the district agriculturalists reports, Zaslow attempted to calculate the acreage seeded to wheat for the district and arrived at 350,000 acres for 1930. That total is significantly higher than the data found in the Census. Zaslow, "The Development of the Mackenzie," 282. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1927, 145; *Ibid.*, 1928, 134;

The image of the Peace country as a wheat empire had led farmers into wheat, and that prophecy appeared to be fulfilled in the mid-1920s. But the high quality of the 1926 crop, and the high yields of the 1927 crop proved to be anomalies. The 1929, 1930, and to a lesser degree, 1931 crops were damaged by heavy fall rain and frost.[53] Despite a good year in 1932, the pattern of failed production continued in the early stages of the Depression. In 1933, spring seeding occurred at the end of March, and growing conditions had been excellent. In August, Charles Frederick, the editor of the *Peace River Record*, remarked that a bumper crop of high grade wheat appeared certain. Four consecutive days of frost beginning September 1, followed by rain throughout September and October led Frederick to consider the crop "worthless."[54] The following year, optimism again dominated. An early spring, excellent growing conditions, and an absence of frost led to predictions of a bumper crop. But Albright noted he could not remember a more dreary September as it rained for twenty consecutive days. The rain

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Ibid., 1929, 61. *Census of the Prairie Provinces*, 1926, Table 98, 740 and Table 100, 750. *Census of Canada*, 1931, Vol. 8, Table 26, 684-685 and Table 38, 720-3. The Peace River newspaper suggested 1931 crop was the largest ever. *Record*, August 14, 1931 and August 19, 1932.

[52] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1933, 12.

[53] *Record*, October 4, 1929, and September 26, 1930.

[54] *Record*, August 18, September 8, September 22, and October 20, 1933.

and frost-damaged grain remained unharvested in November when a blizzard hit the area.[55] The series of crop failures led many farmers to reduce their wheat acreage in subsequent years.

Farmers, consequently, understood the risks of wheat production in the northern climate even with an early maturing variety such as Garnet. Garnet's suitability as an export wheat, however, continued to be challenged by the metropolitan market in the 1930s. Rumours persisted that wheat from Northern Alberta had a reduced milling quality. Most of these rumours focused upon the limitations of Garnet wheat. Peace River boosters rejected these rumours as symptomatic of southern ignorance of northern conditions. Together with farmers they lobbied for an increase in the allowable moisture content of wheat, and railed against the Dominion government grading rules.[56] They sought changes in the grain grading system to recognise the peculiar circumstances of growing wheat in the Peace River region, and demanded representation on the Board of Grain Commissioners. When, in 1934, the government removed Garnet from the No. 2 Northern grade and indicated it would introduce a separate grading system for Garnet, the farmers' concern for consistent returns became apparent. Even with the early maturing Garnet, a frost free harvest was unpredictable. Rather than shift away from this wheat, they sought tests to determine the price levels of the new grades prior to making decisions regarding seeding.[57]

Scientific studies continued and they demonstrated that Garnet wheat was indeed an inferior variety.[58] These studies, however, not only questioned the quality of Garnet wheat, but also all wheat varieties grown in northern Alberta. Tests at the University of

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[55] *Record*, August 17, September 14, October 5, October 19, and November 2, 1934.

[56] PAA, Allen Papers, Grande Prairie Board of Trade to W.A. Blatchford (Grain Commissioner), November 15, 1930. *Record*, October 26, 1934, November 23, 1934, and October 11, 1935

[57] NAC, RG 80, vol. 9, file T-14-55, D.M. Kennedy to R.B. Hanson, December 4, 1934.

[58] *Record*, January 29, 1937.

Alberta concluded that wheat grown throughout the Peace River country, but especially in the grey-wooded soil zone, often had protein content well below the accepted average necessary to produce high quality blending wheats.[59] The researchers believed that the low temperatures and high moisture levels during the northern growing season, combined with the low nitrogen content of the grey-wooded and, to a lesser degree, the degraded black soils, produced a low-protein wheat product. Only the black soil zone in the Sexsmith to Hythe and Grimshaw to Fairview areas produced a consistent wheat crop with moderate protein content.[60]

Peace River boosters had, at first, rejected the scientific evidence about northern grown wheat.[61] But given this evidence, the Dominion government finally acted. In 1938, the government introduced the new grading system for Garnet wheat and removed it from the general contract grades. Wheat consisting of at least 85% high grade Garnet could be graded No. 1, No. 2, or No. 3 Garnet. All poor samples of Garnet and other wheat which consisted of 10% or more Garnet was graded as No. 5 Northern or feed. A few farmers continued to grow Garnet for feed purposes, but on the whole, growing Garnet had become unprofitable.

Although many farmers on marginal lands decreased their wheat production following the rejection of Garnet wheat, the increase in wheat prices in 1937 led those farmers in the transitional soil zones to seek alternative varieties for seeding. Once again, they consulted with the scientific community regarding a replacement for Garnet. Despite efforts at the Experimental Farms and the Alberta Schools of Agriculture, however, a new early maturing variety had not been licensed.[62] Their reluctance to seed Reward led them to experiment with Red Bobs 222, a variation of the original Red Bobs produced at the University of Alberta in 1926. They heeded the advice of Albright and the Dominion scientists to reduce the chance of Garnet admixtures, and did not seed Reward, Marquis or Red Bobs into Garnet stubble.[63] Because Red Bobs 222 matured a few days later than Garnet and proved susceptible to bleaching and smut, farmers sought advice on other varieties. They followed the development of Thatcher, an American-bred wheat variety maturing two or three days earlier than Marquis, and soon began to seed this variety in the black soil zones of the region. Thatcher, however, was in demand in southern areas for its resistance to rust, and, as a result, the seed supply was limited. Almost by default, Red Bobs 222 became the dominant northern wheat variety by 1940.

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[59] K.W. Neatby and A.G. McCalla, *The Production and Quality of Cereal Crops in the Park and Wooded Areas of Alberta*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 30 (July 1938), 18-9 and 27-9. A summary of the results of these tests was printed in the *Record*, July 9, 1937.

[60] A.G. McCalla and Dyson Rose, *The Quality of Alberta-Grown Wheat*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 37, (1941), 22.

[61] For example *Record*, December 10, 1937. One of the most interesting responses came from R.H. Macdonald, the Peace River representative on the Grain Standards Board. He concluded that the 1936 crop had been an anomaly and that Peace River produced the highest quality wheat. *Record*, February 19, 1937. Some farmers in the region agreed with the Board of Grain Commissioners' decision. *Block News*, July 2, 1937.

Although Peace River farmers seeded a larger acreage to wheat in the early stages of World War Two as farmers expected the market price of wheat to increase as it had during the Great War, the proportion of their seeded acreage devoted to wheat continued its slow decline from its 1931 peak. The Dominion government program to reduce the acreage seeded to wheat in Canada merely helped confirm the decisions made by Peace River farmers.[64] The emergence of a rust problem in the Peace River region during the

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[62] NAC, RG 17, vol. 3987, James Murray (Olds College) to Dr. Newman, March 4, 1938. *Ibid.*, Newman to A.M. Wilson (Vermilion School of Agriculture), April 19, 1937 and Wilson to Newman, April 24, 1937. *Ibid.*, Newman to E.C.Stacey, November 24, 1937.

[63] *Record*, November 5, 1937; December 17, 1937; March 3, 1938; and March 10, 1938. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1939, 87.

[64] Ian Macpherson and John Herd Thompson, "An Orderly Reconstruction: Prairie Agriculture in World War II," in *Canadian Papers in Rural History* IV, D. Akenson, ed., (Gananoque: Langdale, 1984), 13. C.F. Wilson, *A Century of Canadian Grain*, (Saskatoon, Prairie Books, 1978), 684. George Britnell, "The War and Canadian Wheat," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 7 (1941), 402-9. The Dominion program was thoroughly explained to Peace River farmers by their Member of Parliament Jack Sissons. *Block News*, April 24, 1941.

Second World War, furthermore, proved a problem for Red Bobs production.[65] Finally, and more importantly, the quality of Red Bobs 222, like Garnet, was soon questioned by the milling industry. By 1941, two University of Alberta professors recommended that farmers consider replacing wheat as a crop north of Edmonton and many Peace River farmers began to heed their advice.[66]

Farmers in the region did not turn away from wheat entirely. Indeed, in the black soil zones around Spirit River and Fairview and in some areas of the Grande Prairie it continued to be a dominant crop. Soil, topography, and moisture conditions in these areas assisted farmers in their attempts to make a living within the image of the Peace region as a wheat empire. The community thus continued to assist the scientists in a search for a viable wheat variety. The Beaverlodge Experimental station reported, "[s]pecial effort was made to secure a more satisfactory variety of high quality wheat for the district. By co-operative trial on twenty-four farms three outstanding hybrids were tested with standard varieties."[67] A new variety, Saunders emerged in 1948. It ripened early, yielded like Thatcher, and maintained the quality of Marquis. As a result, Saunders replaced Red Bobs on many Peace River farms, and Red Bobs, like Garnet, was excluded from the highest grades in 1951.[68] Despite their grading liabilities, both Garnet and Red Bobs remained important varieties in the Peace River region, and became an important source of livestock feed. The continued controversy surrounding the quality of Peace River wheat, however, resulted in a steady reduction in wheat-seeded acreage in the area through 1951.

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[65] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1943, 100.

[66] McCalla and Rose, *The Quality of Alberta-Grown Wheat*, 22.

[67] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1946, 160; The number of farms participating increased to 31 in 1946. *Ibid.*, 1947, ??.

[68] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1948, 119. The Department of Agriculture noted that criticism of Red Bobs had existed for numerous years, but, "in fairness to farmers," the government had maintained its grading position until an alternative variety had been developed. *Ibid.*, 1949, 133. Philip Keddie, "The Changing Varietal Composition of Prairie Wheat, 1941-85," *Prairie Forum*, 15 (Spring 1990), 105.

Despite all of the problems farmers faced in commercial wheat production, it remained the most important cash crop in the region (Appendix 2, Figure 1). Eighty percent of farms in Census Division 16 reported revenue from wheat in 1940 and it was the highest per farm revenue source in all districts. The unpredictable returns generated by wheat had an impact, nonetheless. Despite the reliance upon wheat for commercial purposes, farmers demonstrated a clear willingness to experiment with alternative cash crops and agricultural practices.

R.W. Murchie concluded that coarse grain production, notably oats, dominated the pioneer stages of agrarian settlement. He argued that oats served as a feed crop for livestock and allowed the farmer to maintain a subsistence on the land until a commercial pattern could be established.[69] It is not surprising, therefore, that oats was the first crop grown in most districts in the Peace River country.[70] It is surprising, however, that the proportion of seeded acres devoted to oats production remained substantially higher than the Alberta average throughout the period of study (Figure 5-3), and that the total acreage devoted to oats production in both Census Division 15 and 16 actually increased rather than decreased prior to 1951 (Figure 5-1). In Census Division 15, in fact, oats was the most important crop prior to the Second World War. The high levels of oats production is partially explained by its use as a forage crop. A field seeded to oats could be grazed by livestock within one month of seeding, cut for hay at the milk stage of development and then used as a pasture, or threshed and the grain fed to horses, cattle and swine.[71]

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[69] R.W. Murchie, "Chapter IV: Agricultural Development in Comparison to other Regions," in Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 72-3.

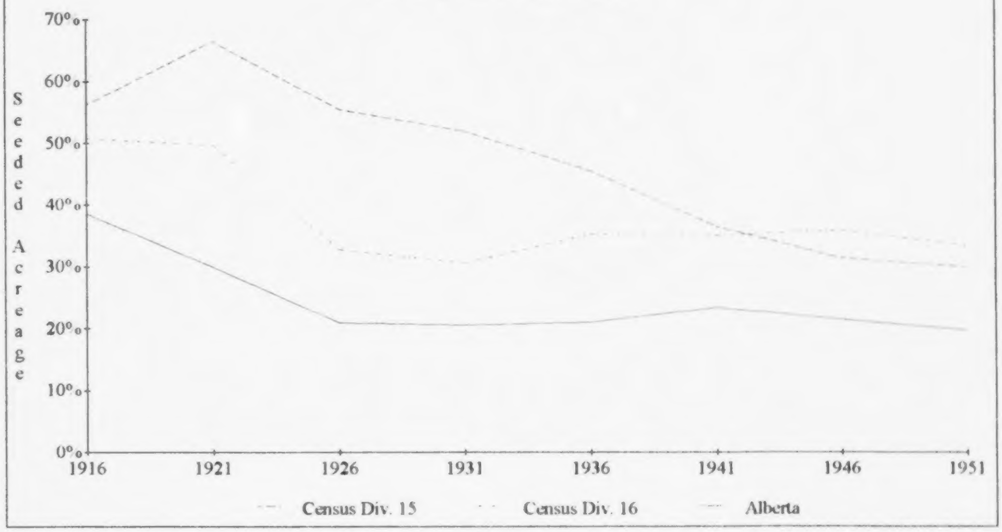
[70] The original settlers in the North Peace harvested 72,444 bus. of wheat compared to 279,226 bus of oats in 1916. *Record*, March 24, 1916. This is the experience noted for the Battle River district. This district settled 1922-30 grew oats for several years and exported its first wheat shipments in 1928. R.M. Patterson, *Far Pastures*, 7; *Record*, October 19, 1928. Similar experiences were reported at Halcourt in the 1920s and Montney B.C. in the 1930s. Moyles, ed. *Challenge of the Homestead*, 64-5, 78. PAA, "Diary of unknown settler," Acc. 91.301.

[71] F.S. Nowosad, *Annual Crops for Hay and Pasture*, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Publication No. 860, (May 1951).

In the grey-wooded soil zone and those areas settled in the late 1920s, oats use as a forage crop for livestock helps explain its continued importance throughout the period. But the use of oats as a livestock feed does not explain the acreage devoted to oats production throughout the Peace River region. Farmers in the Peace seeded more oats than the average Alberta farmer because oats represented an important cash crop for Peace River farmers.

Figure 5-3

Acreage Devoted to Oats Production



Oats production outstripped home consumption very quickly, and farmers discovered markets for their grain in the local development community. They sold oats, oats cut for hay, and wild hay to the local freighters, the railway builders and to new homesteaders entering the region.[72] They also grew oats for export from the region. Indeed, the decline in oats prices following the Great War had led to a greatly reduced oats acreage in 1921.[73] Oats production remained important, nevertheless. Horses, a primary consumer of oats, remained the primary source of farm traction throughout the 1920s. The second settlement wave beginning in 1927 and the expansion of the railway system between 1924 and 1931, moreover, provided an important local market for oats crops. New settlers also continued the trend of seeding oats as the first crop on their new homestead. Raising oats for the local market, however, did not satisfy Peace River farmers. The pioneer conditions which led to high levels of oats production during the early settlement period were enhanced by environmental and market conditions.

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[72] Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 80, 91. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie Basin," 262. Harry Giles, "Early Days in the Peace River Country," 16. Magnus Gudlaugson, *Three Times a Pioneer*, (Winnipeg: n.p., 1959), 27. *Record*, November 19, 1915.

Oats thrives under cool, moist conditions, and although it produces best on highly fertile soils, it will grow on land which will not support wheat or barley.[74] Oats also yielded, on average, 25 bushels per acre higher than wheat. Furthermore, the main varieties of oats available in the 1920s, Legacy, Banner, and Victory, matured in approximately 100 days, and thus could be matured in the Peace River country with some consistency if seeded early. This led W.D. Albright to recommend oats for newly settled areas where early frost was a problem.[75] The climate also provided an added advantage for Peace River farmers. As early as 1926, Peace River farmers and agricultural scientists discovered that the climatic conditions in the north made it "exceptionally adapted to the growing of high quality seed."[76] Although the cash returns on oats as a feed grain and oats hay were lower than wheat, the premiums received for seed quality grain when combined with the higher yield made oats a lucrative enterprise. Peace River farmers drew upon the expertise of the Experimental Station staff and the district agriculturalist to build a seed growing industry. They created the Peace River Co-operative Seed Growers' Association in 1928, and received financial assistance from the provincial government to operate seed cleaners at variety of locations.[77]

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[73] *Record*, April 20, 1921

[74] R.A. Derrick and D.G. Hamilton, *Oats in Canada*, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Publication No. 554, (n.d. 1946?), 6-7. J.N. Welsh, et al, *Oat Varieties: Past and Present*, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Publication No. 891 (June 1953).

[75] *Block News*, November 26, 1937.

[76] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1926, 8. Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 34-5.

By the beginning of the Depression, oats had become a significant cash crop for Peace River farmers in the older settled districts. In many respects, these farmers used oats to hedge against risks in wheat production. If seeded early and prices warranted, the oats crop could be matured in the field for seed purposes, but if spring seeding was delayed or the crop damaged by frost, it could be cut for hay and used on the farm for livestock feed.[78] Seeding oats, consequently, reduced the risk of financial collapse due to climate condition and provided the incentive of possibly high cash returns. Under these conditions, the emphasis on oats as a crop in Census Division 16 increased steadily in the 1930s as farmers sought diversity from wheat production (Figure 5-3), and thousands of bushels of seed oats were exported from the Peace River region throughout the Depression.[79] In order to ensure success, however, oats had to be seeded early. Farmers tended to seed oats after their wheat crops, and thus oats suffered from frost and rain damage. The success of oats growing when seeded early and the problems related to wheat production led Albright to conclude that one problem for Peace River agriculture was too much low grade wheat and not enough high grade oats.[80] The profits available in seed oats production led many farmers to rectify this problems. Several new seed growers' associations were formed, and in 1940 the district agriculturalist remarked that "a notable item in seed grain production is the attention given to growing seed oats in the

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[77] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1929. By the Second World War, four of the twelve provincial government assisted seed cleaning operations were in the Peace. *Ibid.*, 1943, 18.

[78] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1931, 68-72; *Ibid.*, 1933, 73; *Ibid.*, 1937, 101; and Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie Basin," 294.

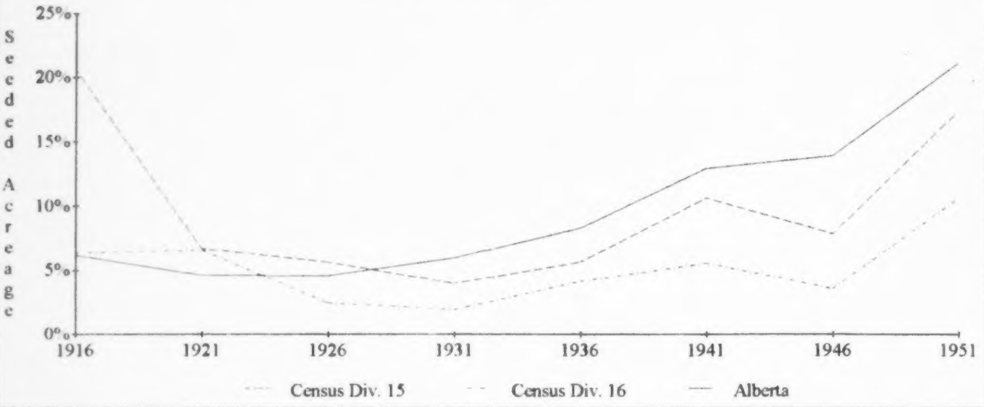
[79] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1932, 71-4. *Ibid.*, 1938, 128. *Ibid.*, 1940, 89. *Ibid.*, 1943, 13.

[80] *Block News*, March 6, 1936 and August 13, 1937. The Dominion Experimental Station continued to search for an early maturing oats variety to overcome this problem throughout the 1930s. Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1937, 48.

Grande Prairie district."[81] As it had with wheat production, the circumstances of the Second World War, confirmed the existing strategies of Peace River farmers as the markets for coarse grains expanded and demand for seed oats increased.[82]

Figure 5-4

Acreage Devoted to Barley Production



Barley never achieved the same importance as oats in the economic cycle. Farmers devoted roughly 5% of their seeded acreage to barley production, and it remained below the Alberta average (Figure 5-4).[83] A fair protein source, barley could be mixed with oats or hay and fed to livestock on the farm as a feed grain and generated modest returns as a feed crop for market. Barley production, consequently, tended to follow trends in livestock production in the region. But barley could also be sold for a premium if malting grades could be grown, and thus offered an opportunity to diversify away from wheat production. Scientific evidence in the 1930s suggested the grey-wooded soil zones were well suited to the production of malt barley. The low nitrogen content of these soils which hindered wheat production actually helped build the high starch, low protein content of malting barley. Malt barley, however, must be well and uniformly ripened. The primary variety of barley available to farmers, O.A.C. 21, matured too late for the Peace River climate and often suffered from frost damage or irregular maturity. The experimental variety, Peatland, proved to be even later maturing and the Dominion scientists refused to recommend its use in Alberta.[84] A modest change occurred late in the 1930s with the introduction of Olli barley. A week earlier than its predecessors, Olli also proved suitable as a malt variety when harvested before the fall rains or frosts.[85] The continued threat of frost, nevertheless, made barley a risky crop. Frost not only limited barley's suitability as a malt or feed grain, but also limited its use as forage. In order to feed barley to livestock as hay, it must be threshed in order to remove the beard.[86] Hence oats was a much better coarse grain choice for farmers in the Peace region.

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[81] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1940, 89. NAC, RG 17, vol. 3983, Newman to Albright, May 17, 1937. *Record*, April 7, 1938. *Block News*, November 13, 1936 and March 5, 1937.

[82] Macpherson and Thompson, "An Orderly Reconstruction," 13-15.

[83] The high proportion of barley acreage in 1916 is due to the low levels of seeded acreage generally rather than unusual levels of barley. It suggests that a certain number of acres of barley were necessary as a feed grain for horses, but beyond that barley had little use.

The increased production of seed grain in the Peace River region made field and soil management an important consideration. Summerfallow was the predominant method of maintaining fertility in the southern prairies. First, it allowed a farmer to store moisture for crop growing. Second, it served as an effective method of weed control. And third, it increased the available nutrients in the soil, most notably nitrogen.[87] Farmers fallowed land only when they gained a substantial economic benefit from the practice. Ken Norrie has shown how moisture conservation and increased nutrients provided by summerfallow increased yields and reduced the risk of crop failure due to drought. Farmers, consequently, received a better and more reliable return if they fallowed part of their land.[88] Peace River farmers, however, rarely fallowed as much land as the average Alberta farmer, and widespread acceptance of fallow in the Peace River crop rotation was limited to the Depression years (Figure 5-5).

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[84] O.S. Aamodt and W.H. Johnston, *Peatland: A Malting Barley for the Grey-Wooded Soil Areas of Alberta*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Circular No. 20, (1936), 6-7 and 14. L.H. Newman, *The Best Varieties of Grain* (1940).

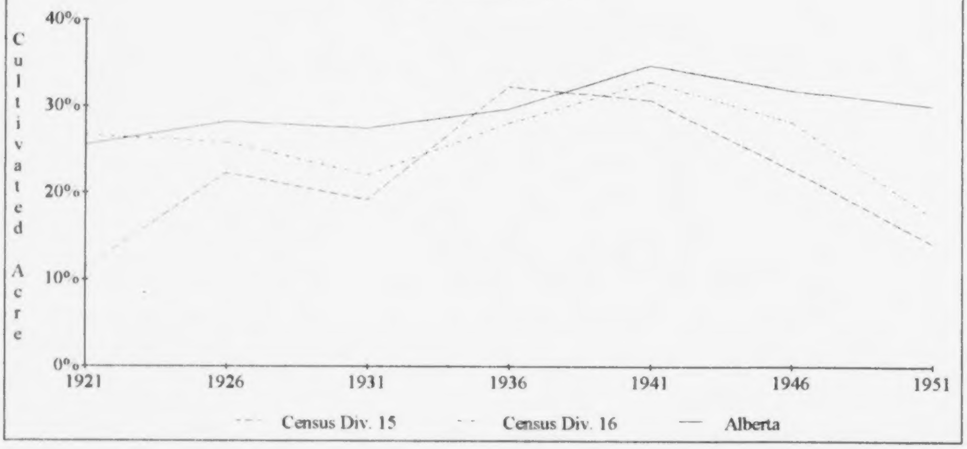
[85] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1937, 104-6. *Record*, September 27, 1935 and September 25, 1936.

[86] NAC, RG 17, vol. 3885, W.D. Albright to Chas. Saunders, March 18, 1921.

[87] R.A. Hedlin, "The Place of Summerfallow in Agriculture on the Canadian Prairies," in *Prairie Production Symposium: Soils and Land Resources*, (report of a conference sponsored by the Canadian Wheat Board, October 29-31, 1980).

Figure 5-5

Acreage Devoted to Fallow



Large scale summerfallow thus first appeared when severe economic conditions made raising a crop uneconomical. At its peak during the Depression, summerfallow accounted for approximately 32% of cultivated acreage in the Peace River country. But poor economic conditions were not the only factor. The increase in fallowed acres during the Depression also reflects the growing concern with weeds in the Peace River region. During the early settlement period, Peace River was isolated from the southern settlement frontier, and did not suffer from a noxious weed problem. Only during the second settlement wave did weeds begin to offer substantial problems to Peace River settlers.[89] The editor of the *Block News* declared "Do You Want To Be Driven From the Peace

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[88] Ken Norrie, "Dry Farming and the Economics of Risk Bearing: The Canadian Prairies, 1870-1930," *Agricultural History* 51 (January 1977), 134-48.

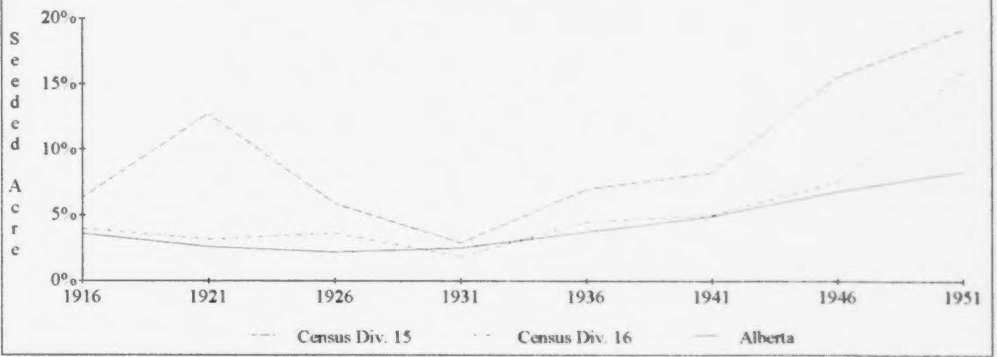
[89] Herbert Groh, *Peace-Athabasca Weeds*, Canada, Department of Agriculture Publication, No. 556, (1936).

River Block? If Not then keep the Peace River Block Free From Weeds."[90] At the same time as weeds became a problem, the production of seed grain proliferated and the importance of eliminating weeds increased; summerfallow took on added importance.[91]

While oats remained the premier forage crop in the Peace River country prior to World War Two, Figure 5-6 illustrates the increasingly important role of cultivated hay in the region's agricultural patterns.[92] The poor quality of wild pasture in the forested grey-wooded soil zone had originally led farmers to seed hay and forage crops.[93] This explains their greater importance in Census Division 15 where grey-wooded soil predominates. The possibility of cash returns, however, made oats the preferred forage crop in the region in the 1920s. What is more, the yields and quality of alfalfa, timothy, and sweet clover, the most important hay crops in the 1920s, proved disappointing. Alfalfa varieties did not mature well in the short growing season and acidic soil of the grey-wooded zone. Timothy, an excellent hay for horses, required high nitrate levels, lacking in grey-wooded soils, for modest yields. Another hay crop, sweet clover,

Figure 5-6

Acreage Devoted to Cultivated Hay



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[90] *Block News*, July 21, 1931.

[91] *Record*, June 3, 1932.

[92] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1940, 92.

[93] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1931, 68-70.

produced well in the region, but it proved to be unpalatable to livestock if not cut precisely at maturity.[94] As wheat production increased in the 1920s, cultivated hay production decreased markedly.

The Depression and the fall in wheat prices led farmers to consider higher levels of forage crop production, and they turned to cultivated hay once again.[95] It became a leading method of soil management and weed control. Hay production soon displaced summerfallow in the crop rotation system on grey-wooded soils. The Alberta government had begun to recommend forage crops for soil building in the grey-wooded soil zones in the late 1920s. The agricultural scientists had long understood the nitrogen building characteristics of legume forage crops such as alfalfa, alsike and red clover, and sweet clover.[96] These hay crops, however, could be cut only once in the Peace River country and thus produced less hay than annual crops such as oats. They had also failed to add fibre to the soil. By the mid-1930s farmers began using alfalfa or sweet clover in conjunction with grasses to improve yields. The legumes, when mixed with brome, creeping red fescue or timothy grass, proved to be an effective method of soil management. The alfalfa and clover restored nutrients to the soil; the grasses added fibre. Furthermore, they competed effectively with weeds and thus acted as weed control. Together they improved fertility and the moisture holding capabilities of the land and helped prevent erosion. In other words, they enhanced the overall productive quality of the grey-wooded soils, and the government advocated their use.[97]

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[94] R. Newton and J. Ficht, *Experiments with Timothy*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 3 (December 1926). James Fryer, *Alfalfa in Alberta*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Circular No. 8 (May 1930). James Fryer, *Growing Sweet Clover*, University of Alberta, College of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 2 (October 1930). Forage Plants and Husbandry Division, *Alfalfa for Hay, Silage, and Pasture*, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Publication No. 735 (May 1942).

[95] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1932, 71-4.

[96] F.A. Wyatt and J.D. Newton, *Wooded Soils and Their Management*.

[97] Wyatt and Newton, *Wooded Soils and Their Management*. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1934, 70-72; *Ibid.*, 1937, 101 and 106; *Ibid.*, 1938, 128-32; *Ibid.*, 1940,

Farmers soon discovered economic advantages to hay production. The joint Dominion/Provincial Forage Crop Policy introduced in 1932 provided farmers with financial assistance to purchase legume and grass seeds.[98] Since the capital to purchase seed of any type was limited in the Depression, this financial program influenced the farm management decisions. With the backing of this program, the Provincial agriculturalist at Grande Prairie, G.S. Black, encouraged farmers in the grey-wooded districts such as Valhalla, Whitburn, and Wanham to increase their production of clover and alfalfa.[99] Farmers in the Peace also discovered that, just as with oats, forage crop production for seed purposes could be profitable. In the 1920s, Robert Cochrane of Clairmont won several awards at the Chicago and Toronto Agricultural fairs for timothy seed samples. Farmers also grew brome and western rye grass successfully as a seed crop, and by the end of the Depression, sweet clover, alsike clover, and alfalfa seed production were becoming more important. In a pattern similar to that demonstrated in oats production, farmers formed Forage Seed Growers' Associations and, by 1941, twelve existed in the region.[100] What had started as a crop to build grey-wooded soils was becoming a leading cash crop for the region.

The production of legume seed crops also led to an interest in beekeeping. Although bees had been kept at the Experimental Station at Beaverlodge since 1922, little interest had developed amongst local farmers. According to the Statistics Branch of the Alberta Department of Agriculture, only four beekeepers with twenty-three colonies

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89; *Ibid.*, 1944, 16-20; *Ibid.*, 1945, 13-16.

[98] Wetherell, *Mixed Farmyards in Alberta*, 27-8.

[99] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1938, 130; *Ibid.*, 1941, 10; *Ibid.*, 1943, 14.

[100] Grande Prairie Board of Trade, *Facts Worth Knowing*, (1928). Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1927, 35; *Ibid.*, 1928, 34; *Ibid.*, 1929, 27; *Ibid.*, 1930, 32; *Ibid.*, 1937, 99-101; *Ibid.*, 1941, 80-81. By the late 1930s, small amounts of alfalfa seed, alsike clover seed and sweet clover seed production was also under way.

operated in the Peace River area in 1928.[101] The Depression and the increased amount of forage crop production for hay and seed, however, led to increasing excitement about this industry amongst some regional farmers. "Beekeeping in the Peace is not on a commercial basis and hardly likely to become so," reported the *Peace River Block News*, "but scores of people keep one or more colonies and more are doing so all the time."[102] The increasing interest in bees, led Albright to invite the Dominion Government Apiarist, C.B. Gooderham to the station, and following a meeting with local farmers, a Peace River Beekeepers Association was created.[103] These inquiries continued through World War II as farmers shifted more acreage away from wheat and into cultivated hay production.[104]

Despite the problems growing wheat and the difficulty of improving forest land for agriculture discussed in Chapter 4, the proportion of land devoted to crops in the Peace River country surpassed the Alberta average by the end of World War II (Appendix 2, Figure 3). The Peace River farmers had diversified their holdings into a variety of crops including wheat, coarse grains, and forage crops. Because settlement in the Peace River region occurred about a decade after the greater proportion of arable land in Alberta had been settled, and the pioneers encountered forest interspersed by prairie rather than open grass lands, cropped land lagged behind the Alberta average for the first 30 years. The continued experimentation, however, and the willingness of Peace River farmers to grow a multitude of crops led them to continue to develop their farms, even during the Depression.

The relative importance of oats and forage crops, the difficulty of improving land for crop production, and the large areas devoted to natural pasture suggested that livestock had a position of importance in Peace River agriculture. The countryside had been championed as a potential livestock country from the beginning, and early settlers such as Bill English and H.E. Calkin at Spirit River had made a living as ranchers.[105] Fur traders, scientific exploration parties, and surveyors had all commented upon the possibilities for livestock production. Farmers' limited success with wheat production, moreover, indicates that mixed farming could predominate in the Peace River country. After all, agricultural experts had conducted a long "crusade" in the prairies in favour of mixed farm practices, and the local booster community in the Peace River country participated with enthusiasm.[106] Livestock had also been a vital subsistence activity amongst pioneer farmers. Early settlers like Alexander Monkman had relied upon a few pigs and a cow to supply themselves with food products, and Charles Plavin, Clyde Campbell, David Halldin, and Cecilia Goodenough all recalled that the first purchases made by a new farmer in the 1920s and 1930s continued to be a milk cow with calf and a few pigs.[107] Livestock, however, did not fulfill the potential suggested by the imagery.

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[101] NAC, RG 17, B.II.A., vol. 2849, file 1-40-1 part 1, "The Dominion Experimental Sub-station, Beaverlodge, Alberta, 1929." Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1928, 141.

[102] *Block News*, June 21, 1935.

[103] NAC, RG 17, B.II.A., vol. 2849, 1-40-1 part 1, "Beginning with Bees," (Dec. 1935). *Block News*, June 21, 1935

[104] *Block News*, April 9, 1942 and June 25, 1942.

Horses were the most important animal kept by Peace River farmers. Farmers stumped newly cleared land, broke prairie sod, ploughed fields, seeded fields, harvested fields, and transported produce with horses. Shipping horses into the region, however, proved to be an expensive project, and Figure 5-7 illustrates the relatively impoverished

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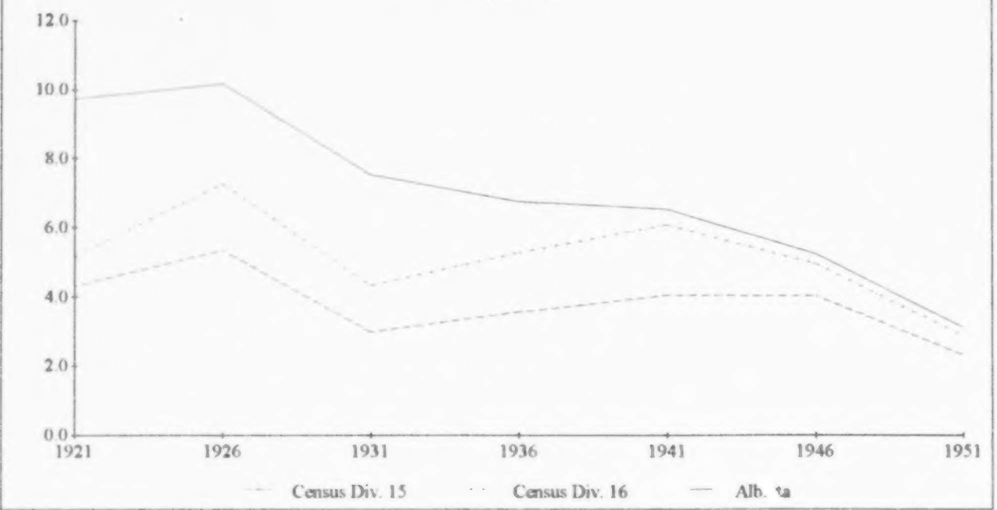
[105] *Chiepe Siepe: A History of Spirit River*, 20.

[106] Voisey discusses the campaign in southern Alberta in *Vulcan*, 77-80. Several examples of the mixed farming crusade can be found in the Peace region. For examples, see *Record*, June 22 and July 27, 1928 or Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1927, 79. It seemed most vociferous when wheat production had failed. *Record*, September 26, 1930 and October 3, 1930.

[107] These accounts come from such diverse areas as Battle River, Halcourt, Valleyview, and Fort St. John. PAA, Charles Plavin Files, Acc. 65.92, Item 46, "Reminiscences." Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 58-62. Halldin, "Pioneering in Alberta's Peace Country," 45. Ceclia Goodenough, "Homesteading in North-West Canada," *The Geographical Journal*, 83 (March 1934), 193.

Figure 5-7

Horses per Farm



nature of Peace River farmers. The number of horses per farm never reached the Alberta average, and as a result, horses were highly valued in the Peace River region.[108] A brief survey of auction notices in the Berwyn/Fairview district for the period 1924-28 reveals the importance of horses to the early farmers. Every auction notice listed the draft horses first suggesting that they were the most important item in the sale.

Peace River farmers usually had two teams of matched draft animals for farm work. These horses, almost always geldings or mares, were usually eight or nine years old and weighed 650 kg. apiece. They would be used in harness as a pair, or with large equipment as a team of four. Most farmers also had a few unmatched draft horses, often younger and smaller than the teams, to serve as backups and to pull lighter equipment such as a sleigh. Besides the draft horses, a prosperous farmer might also own a saddle horse for travelling in the district.[109] Although a few wealthy farmers owned a large number of horses, few Peace River farmers raised horses for sale. The census information indicates that only 771 of the 20,280 horses in Census Division 16 were sold in 1925, and an even smaller proportion, 543 of 30,111, changed hands in 1930.[110] Hence, horses in the Peace River region had high value, but played a relatively minor role in the commercial economy.

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[108] For just one example see Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 54.

[109] R.M. Patterson, *Far Pastures*, W.L. Morton, ed., *God's Galloping Girl*, Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, and Mary Percy Jackson, *On the Last Frontier* provide an indication of the importance of a horse for travelling in the Peace River region. One person remarked that outside of the Grande Prairie, Spirit River, and Fairview districts, a horse was essential for travelling. Morison, "A Journey Into the Peace Country,

Cattle were a different story. A few efforts were made at large scale ranching operations. The Kleskun Ranch on the Grande Prairie, the D.H.C. Ranching Corporation operation on the Battle River prairie, and the Wood Gundy Ranch in the Fort St. John area, all failed and may have been more appropriately considered speculative ventures rather than honest efforts to ranch. The large tracts of land on the Kleskun ranch were eventually sold to settlers in 1927.[111] Ranching thus never became a dominant industry in the Peace River country. Figure 5-8 illustrates that the average number of cattle per farm in Census Division 15 and 16, while following relatively similar cycles of production, never reached the Alberta average. The limited natural pasture, the long and unpredictable winter feeding season, the limited water supply, and the distance to market all hindered ranch development. The failure of Peace River cattle numbers to reach the Alberta average does not suggest that cattle production was unimportant. It must be remembered that large scale ranching in the foothills prejudices the Alberta wide figures. The dreams of some entrepreneurs for a ranching frontier, however, never materialised in the region.

In the early settlement period, it appeared ranching and dairying might become an important component of Peace River agriculture. Encouraged by the "Cow Bill,"

Beaver, (July 1931), 239.

[110] *Census of the Prairie Provinces*, 1926, Table 104, 772; and *Census of Canada*, 1931, Vol. 8, Table 30, 694.

[111] *Record*, February 15, 1918 and April 9, 1920. *Herald*, June 21, 1921, April 15, 1924, April 26, 1926, May 9, 1927, and October 28, 1927. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie Basin," 266, 277.

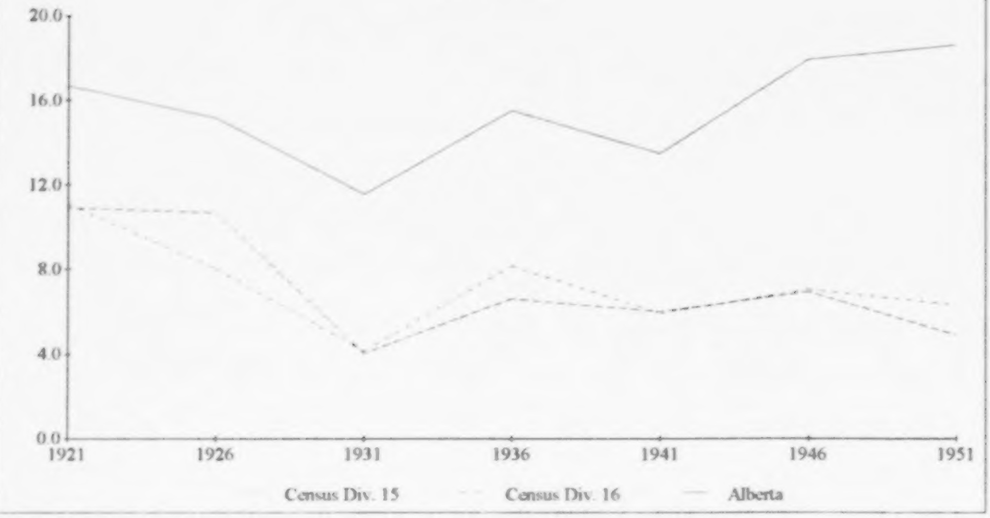

Figure 5-8

Cattle per Farm

many farmers purchased livestock to hedge the risk of agriculture during the pioneer period. The dry conditions in southeastern Alberta and the export of cattle from this region led to a dramatic increase in the livestock population in the Peace River country in 1918 and 1919. Every train arriving at Peace River seemed to bring more animals into the region, and the editor of the *Record* remarked that livestock was "becoming the mainstay of Peace River agriculture."[112] Many settlers in districts removed from the rail line such as Waterhole and Pouce Coupé turned to ranching during this period, and cattle were marketed at Peace River from as far away as Fort Vermilion and Fort St. John.[113] The development of a cattle industry proved short lived, however.

Prices for cattle fell dramatically in 1920 and poor hay crops in 1920 and 1921 led to a significant feed shortage. Also important, the large number of homesteaders and soldier settlers entering the district following World War One had occupied much of the good prairie land thus reducing the available natural pasture. The grain farmers expressed concern that wild free range cattle were destroying crops.[114] The M.D. of Peace and other local governments, consequently, passed herd by-laws requiring cattle to be fenced into pastures. Called pound-laws, these rules limited the grazing land available to prospective ranchers in the densely settled zones.[115] Grazing leases could be obtained, but most of this land was forty miles from the railway and subject to cancellation upon one year notice.[116] Ranchers found themselves paying to graze cattle in common herds along the open hill sides of the Peace and Smoky valleys.[117] The poor hay crops and restricted pasture forced Peace River ranchers to sell their livestock into a depressed market and resulted in large financial losses.[118] Carl Dawson, Morris Zaslow, and the Alberta Department of Agriculture all believed this experience prejudiced Peace River farmers against cattle raising in subsequent years.[119]

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[112] The Livestock Encouragement Act gave farmers government assistance to secure loans for cattle purchases. Alberta, *Statutes of Alberta*, 1917, c. 9. *Record*, March 29 and December 20, 1918. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1919, 9-13. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 6-8. Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 46.

[113] Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 266-7. *Record*, June 20, 1922 and October 16, 1924.

Just as important, however, the Peace River environment limited the possibilities of raising large beef cattle herds in some areas. The Alberta Department of Agriculture noted that water shortages made livestock a costly and difficult agricultural product in the

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[114] Mrs. Maud Clifford recalled that the first trial held on the Grande Prairie in 1911 involved Beaverlodge farmer, Garrett Truax shooting stock for damaging his crops. Isabel Campbell, *Grande Prairie*, 53. Clyde Campbell noted that threats of arson, tar and feathers, whipping parties, and death threats accompanied efforts to restrict free roaming cattle near Halcourt. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 198.

[115] *Record*, July 20, 1922. For some of the disputes involving pound laws, see the letters in PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 61, especially A.E. Fergusen to Allen, August 1, 1927 and S.G. Carlyle to Allen, August 2, 1927.

[116] *The Peace River Country*, (1926), 10.

[117] *Record*, May 11, 1922 and April 5, 1923.

[118] Clyde Campbell believed his friend George Hagan lost $2500 in 1920. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 82, 95.

[119] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1928, 62. Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 44. Zaslow, *Northward Expansion*, 47.

Peace River country.[120] Few had expected this problem in 1919 as the Department of the Interior noted that the district was well watered and a "failure to get water at [sixty feet] is unknown."[121] Ten years later, R.L. Rutherford's geological survey made it clear that finding a suitable well water source in the Falher, Fairview, and Spirit River areas of Alberta, and in the Peace River Block was beyond the financial and technical abilities of most farmers.[122] In some other areas where water could be found, local muskegs meant water from wells was brown and unpalatable. The deeply incised river and creek valleys in these areas further complicated the problem for farmers, and several requests for government assistance in drilling deep wells obtained no assistance.[123] Ironically, many of these areas had significant good natural pasture for cattle.

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[120] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1939, 87.

[121] Kitto, *The Peace River District*, (Ottawa: 1919). This emphasis on easy water supply continued in the local booster literature. Peace River Board of Trade, *The Peace River Country*, (1926), 8. Grande Prairie Board of Trade, *Facts Worth Knowing*, (1928). Both of these pamphlets originated in areas where water could be obtained from wells, but made no mention of the difficulties in nearby communities. After Cora Hind had published a series of articles in the *Manitoba Free Press* which pointed to the water shortages, Frederick replied that a few districts were dry, but nearly all communities had a good water supply. *Record*, December 13, 1929.

[122] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 256, R.L. Rutherford, "Report of Progress on the water Survey in the Peace River country," October 1929. A. McQuarrie recalled that water was always a concern at Fairview and Spirit River, while at Valhalla or Hythe water existed in abundance. GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 8, A. McQuarrie, "Now It Can Be Told: Drilling for Oil, Gas and Water." For information on the water problem in the B.C. Block see Morton, ed., *God's Galloping Girl*, 234 and 249; and NAC, MG 26K, Bennett Papers, "Memorandum re: Peace River Block," 380303-17. Robert Ankli and Robert Litt estimated a well cost $100 to $200 on average on the prairies. Where deep drilling was needed, farmers could spend $400 to $600, discover water but not have the technical ability to pump it. Ankli and Litt, "The Growth of Prairie Agriculture: Economic Considerations," in Akenson, ed., *CPRH*, vol.1, 51.

[123] *Herald*, September 6, 1929. The first requests came in 1922. See PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 289A, Greenfield to Hoadley, February 21, 1922. They increased dramatically during the 1930s apparently as farmers expressed an interest in cattle and dairy production. *Ibid.*, file 256, Fahler Board of Trade to Brownlee, April 24, 1931. *Ibid.*, Fairview Board of Trade Resolution, March 30, 1931. *Ibid.*, Cerele Tangente de l'Association Canadienne française de l'Alberta to Brownlee, May 28, 1932. The British Columbia Department of Agriculture did send a water diviner to the district

Unable to obtain water from wells, farmers in these districts watered livestock at sloughs and hauled water in large tanks or turned to scoop-outs or "dug-outs" for drinking water.[124] These dug-outs were created by a horse and scraper or fresno, and thus were usually shallow and easily contaminated. If both livestock and family had to obtain a water source, separate dug-outs had to be created for each. During dry years, conditions could deteriorate quickly as evaporation lowered dug-out levels, and blown soil and dirt settled into the depressions.[125] Water shortfalls limiting livestock production in these areas, remained a problem until the provincial government subsidized the creation of dug-outs throughout the region after World War 2.[126]

Peace River farmers moved away from ranching in the period 1921 to 1925, and, as wheat prices increased in the mid-1920s, cattle numbers declined significantly. Cattle continued to be marketed from the Fort Vermilion and Fort St. John area where large herds of wild range cattle were kept, but only a few ranches remained in the densely settled regions.[127] The treasurer of the M.D. of Peace, Eneas Lamont, remarked that few

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in 1931. *Block News*, July 21, 1931.

[124] *By The Peavine: History of Donnelly-Fahler*, 58-9. *Our Bend in the Peace: Lubeck District*, 6-8. David Halldin, "Pioneering in Alberta's Peace River Country," 47. Ceclia Goodenough, "Home-steading in North-West Canada," 193-4. *Block News*, July 21, 1931 and June 6, 1940. *Record*, October 14, 1932.

[125] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 256, Hugh Allen to Brownlee, May 18, 1931.

[126] PAA, Agriculture, Acc. 73.307, file 126, Peace River District Farm Water Supply Assistance Policy, 1945.

[127] The Census reported that 7,798 cattle were sold alive (marketed) in Census Division 16 in 1925. According to the statistics branch of the Alberta Department of Agriculture, only 3242 head of cattle were marketed by rail in Census Division 16 in 1926. By 1930, the census indicated a further reduction to 2,491. Alberta *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1926, 145. *Census of the Prairie Provinces*, 1926, Table 104, 773. *Census of Canada*, 1931, Vol. 8, Table 30, 694. *Record*, August 17, 1928, August 31, 1928, June 21, 1929, September 6, 1929, and June 3, 1932 contain accounts of cattle arriving at Peace River by river steamer.

farmers in his area continued to raise cattle other than for dairy purposes. High wheat prices, the long winter feeding period, the breaking of natural pastures for crops, and the fencing of lands, meant cattle were less profitable than wheat.[128] Local abattoirs complained about the difficulty obtaining cattle and hogs, and one merchant, Mrs. Emma Weiss, purchased a farm near Lake Cardinal to supply her Main Markets with cattle and hogs.[129] Even the award winning shorthorn herd of J.L. Lamont was sold off in 1929.[130]

Most Peace River farmers had maintained small cattle herds for home consumption of beef and milk at the time of settlement.[131] Soon the growing towns in the area and the high prices for butter and cream encouraged several farmers to develop commercial dairy herds.[132] As grain prices collapsed in 1920, successful herds like J.B. Early's at Peace River or I.V. Macklin's at Grande Prairie produced interest in dairy production and led to the development of creameries at Valhalla, Peace River, Berwyn, Falher, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, and Kilkernan during this period.[133] Dairy production seemed to be the one consistent element of Peace River livestock-based agriculture. Although it increased and decreased in scale depending upon the wheat economy, it maintained an important role in Peace River agriculture throughout the period. Still, as farmers increased their wheat acreage in the late 1920s, dairy herds, like beef herds, were reduced. By 1929, only the Valhalla co-operative creamery and commercial creameries at Pouce Coupé and High Prairie survived. Even these operated below capacity and faced constant threat of closure.[134]

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[128] PAA, M.D. of Peace, Acc. 71.366, file 40, Lamont to T.J. Johnston, February 2, 1927.

[129] *Record*, September 9, 1926 and May 18, 1934.

[130] Lamont captured an award at the Western Canada Livestock show in Calgary and subsequently purchased a prize winning bull from Chicago for breeding purposes. *Record*, December 9, 1927. His herd, including his breeding stock, was purchased primarily by Peace River region buyers. *Record*, October 11, 1929.

[131] Most farmers kept several milk cows and a few chickens so marketing the surplus production in the local market was not unusual. Numerous auction sale notices in the *Record*. For example the October 23, 1924 or October 5, 1928 issues. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 69. PABC, Patterson Papers, Box 3, file 7, Patterson to Lady Scott, June 21, 1926.

[132] Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 14-15, 78-9, and 106-7. *Record*, August 11, 1921 reported that R.J. Thompson had established the first dairy operation and imported a milking machine.

[133] Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 270. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1922, 22-3. *Ibid.*, 1923, 33. *Record*, March 16, 1922, March 23, 1922, June 1,

Albright believed the fall in wheat prices in 1930 would force farmers to abandon commercial farming for a self-sufficient mentality, and the local press called upon farmers to adopt the policy of mixed farming for local consumption. "We could at least produce our own meat, milk, butter, eggs, vegetables, and small fruit," complained Albright.[135] Farmers, however, had shown little interest in self-sustaining agriculture for home production. Poultry, one of the symbols of home consumption, always remained below the Alberta average (Figure 5-9). Bachelors after all refused to keep cattle, hogs,

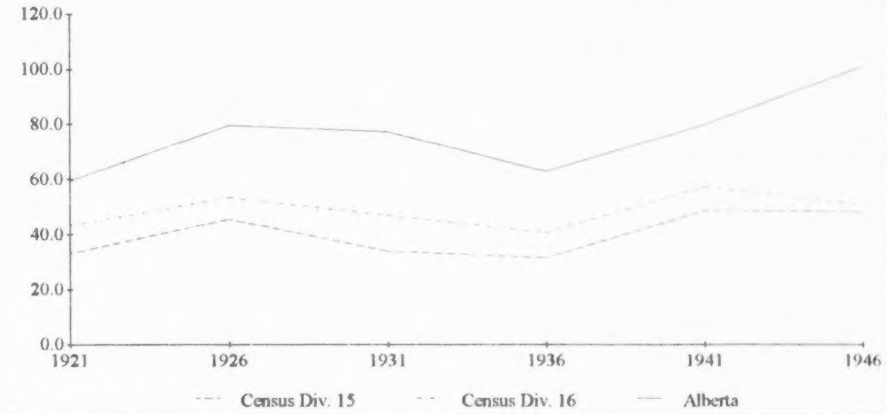

Figure 5-9

Poultry per Farm

1922, October 26, 1922, April 5, 1923, and April 24, 1924.

[134] *Record*, August 31, 1928 and March 14, 1930. *Block News*, March 17, 1931 and March 8, 1932.

[135] *Record*, February 21, March 28 and October 3, 1930. *Block News*, July 15, 1930.

or poultry unless they offered commercial opportunities. Livestock kept the farmer tied to the farm and prevented them from seeking off-farm employment. Only farmers with families would consider keeping animals for home consumption during bad economic periods.[136] Thus, while cattle numbers did increase during the Depression as farmers decreased their wheat acreage and increased hay production especially in the grey-wooded soil zones, they remained a commercial, rather than subsistence, commodity. The commercial limitations of marketing cattle meant they never recovered to the post-World War I levels. Beef production for the local and northern market increased in areas where water was plentiful and a few farmers turned to dairy production once again as creameries re-opened at a few locations, but in most areas of the Alberta sections of Peace River cattle numbers remained lower than might be expected in a ranching economy.[137] Rather than ranching, cattle became a part of an integrated mixed farming system.

In B.C. cattle became a much more important source of revenue. Ranching made inroads along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in the Peace River Block. Chinooks during the winter meant cattle could often be pastured year round and only a limited supply of feed would be necessary thus when the hay crop failed as it did in 1933, the winter pastures provided ranchers with a viable alternative to selling the herd. The limited settlement in the Block prior to 1929 also meant cattle continued to have free range in the district. By 1928, W.S. Bullen operated a large cattle buying operation at Dawson Creek to take advantage of the situation.[138] Cattle herds increased in the midst of the Depression as cattle from dry districts of southern Alberta entered the region, and shipments of cattle from Dawson Creek rose steadily.[139] By 1937, the Dawson Creek

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[136] Ida Hopkins, *To the Peace River Country and On*, 69.

[137] *Census of the Prairie Provinces*, 1936, Table 110, 1172-3. The census showed that in 1935, 6863 cattle including 649 milch cows were sold live (marketed) in Division 16, compared with 5100 slaughtered on the farm. In Division 15, 3249 cattle (690 milch cows) were marketed compared with 1979 slaughtered.

[138] *Journal* March 17, 1928.

[139] *Record*, July 17, 1936.

Livestock Shipping Association conducted a large business in the Peace River Block, and the volume of livestock shipments compared favourably with grain shipments from that region.[140]

Marketing problems proved a greater limitation to ranching in this area than environmental concerns. Getting cattle to market at the appropriate time concerned Peace River ranchers,[141] but maintaining the weight and quality of the animals during the long train route to market seemed most important. They protested that the NAR did not have adequate facilities to feed and water stock en route to Edmonton.[142] Hence, the quality of animals, and the availability of quality breeding stock became a notable concern. Reports of the purchase of high quality breeding stock were front page news in the North Peace, and in B.C. the local newspaper complained that the provincial government provided farmers with no assistance in this area.[143] Unlike grain farmers, the Dominion Agricultural Substation at Beaverlodge had provided ranchers with little assistance until the 1940s.[144] It managed to supply only two shorthorn bulls in 1946, and reported that demand far exceeded supply.[145] Even vetinarian service was unavailable to ranchers in B.C. before 1936.[146]

Swine production, like that of cattle, had been a significant element of Peace River agriculture from the beginning. A car load of hogs was shipped from the area in

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[140] *Block News*, March 22, 1935, April 12, 1935, January 10, 1936, February 7, 1936, April 17, 1936, and January 15, 1937.

[141] For example, the closure of the NAR due to flooding in the summer of 1935 caused a significant problem for livestock shippers. *Record*, August 9, 1935.

[142] See the complaints at the Associated Boards of Trade of the Peace River Country in *Block News*, July 2, 1937.

[143] *Record*, July 3, 1931. *Block News*, May 15, 1936.

[144] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1932, 77.

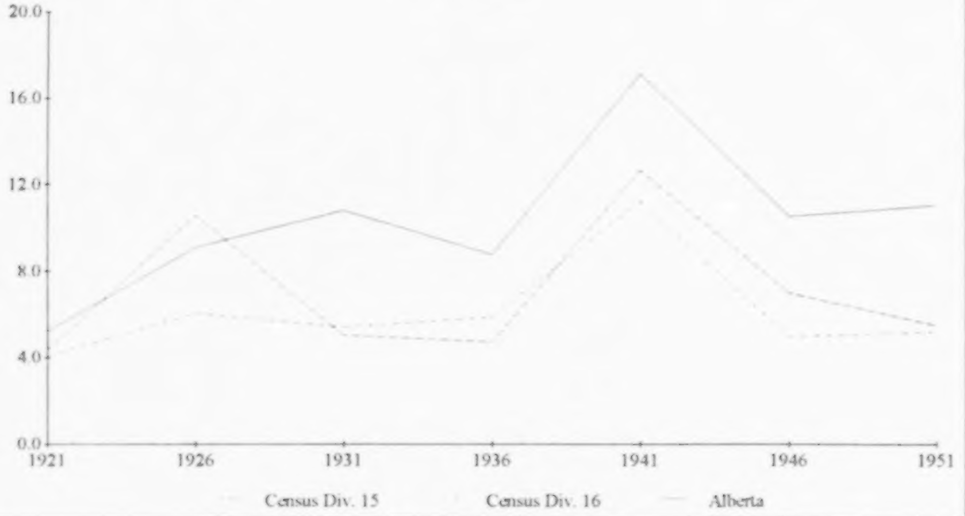
[145] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1946, 161.

[146] *Block News*, April 17, 1936.

1916, the same year the railway reached Peace River, and United Farmers of Alberta locals continued to arrange for shipment in subsequent years.[147] Figure 5-10 shows that in the period 1921 to 1926, hog production increased significantly in Census Division 15 and even showed a modest gain in Census Division 16. The reason for increased swine production in the Peace country and its subsequent decline in the late 1920s were interconnected. The most important factors affecting hog production were the cost of feed grain and distance to market.[148] The poor harvests and low grain prices in the period 1921 to 1925 led to an increase in swine numbers throughout the Peace River region, and notably, throughout Alberta. Getting hogs to market, however, proved difficult. Like cattle, swine lost weight and grade when shipped long distances.[149] The

Figure 5-10

Swine per Farm



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[147] *Record*, June 9, 1916 and July 6, 1917.

[148] T.C. Kerr, "Factors Influencing the Location of Livestock Production," in *Occasional Papers No. 9*, (Agriculture Economics Research Council of Canada, 1967), 34. Wetherell, *Mixed Farm Yards in Alberta*, 87-8.

[149] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1937, 48. The shrinkage was estimated at sixteen to twenty percent. *Block News*, October 9, 1936.

railway, furthermore, was often unprepared for the number of hogs marketed at any given period, and on occasion pigs were left behind at the rail yard increasing the cost to producers and reducing the quality of the animal.

While swine numbers increased during the Depression and especially during World War II, they never competed with grain for a dominant role in Peace River agriculture. Swine production did become a profitable method of marketing the large volumes of low quality wheat grown in the Peace River country during the Depression. Increased British demand for bacon drove up the price of swine in Canada, and Peace River farmers increased their swine populations.[150] W.D. Albright demonstrated the financial viability of hog production in a series of tests at the Beaverlodge station between 1934 and 1940.[151] Feeding hogs oats, oats and No. 5 wheat, or oats and No. 3 barley, he discovered that the swine produced a net return of $0.33, $0.93, and $0.71 per bushel of feed respectively. The average price return for these grains at Beaverlodge during the period was: Oats, $0.22 per bushel; No. 5 wheat, $0.56 per bushel; No. 3 barley, $0.27 per bushel. Since swine finished better when fed oats in combination with either wheat or barley, he recommended a mixture of grain for feeding.[152] Swine, he concluded, were an efficient method of marketing oats, low quality wheat and barley.

Farmers must have reached similar conclusions because swine production increased dramatically during the period Albright conducted his tests. In 1939, B.C. noted an increase in swine production in the Peace, and the Dawson Creek Livestock Shipping Association shipped 3,637 hogs that year compared to only 691 cattle.[153] The price of hogs continued to increase during the war as military requirements for cured meats drove up pork prices. Competition in the hog market, however, was fierce, and Peace River producers did not produce high quality "bacon" hogs demanded by the British.[154] As swine production increased, farmer concerns about quality also escalated. Quality breeding stock were sought by farmers, and twelve Swine Improvement Associations existed in the Peace River Block.[155]

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[150] *Record*, December 1, 1933, December 8, 1933, December 15, 1933, and January 19, 1934.

[151] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1942, 161. Hogs averaged $8.00 per hundred weight during this period for a net return of $7.15 per hundred weight at Beaverlodge. Albright reported the first positive results to Peace River farmers in 1935. *Block News*, June 7, 1935.

[152] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1936, 37. *Ibid.*, 1938, 53.

[153] *Block News*, November 14, 1940.

Thus livestock, just as grain, had become an important element of the Peace River economy. Cattle and swine production for the market increased and decreased depending upon the market where environmental conditions warranted. Both had a greater importance in the grey-wooded soil zones where the return from wheat was most questionable. Swine production proved much more variable than cattle because hogs required less infrastructure and investment thus making responses to market conditions easier. Only where environmental conditions allowed did farmers make large-scale, long-term investments in cattle production. Livestock complemented rather than replaced the grain economy in the Peace Country.

Through adjustment to market and environmental conditions, a mixed farm system had developed, and experimentation continued to occur as Peace River farmers sought improved economic returns. The product value per farm reported by the census and illustrated in Figures 5-11 and 5-12 show both the impact of economic cycles, and the diversity of products generating farm income. Field crops remained the most important element of the Peace River farm production cycle, but by the end of the Second World War both livestock and animal products had become important elements of the system. Gardens and woodlands also generated a small, yet still important, source of income. The figures also make it clear that the income levels in Census Division 15 were consistently lower than in Division 16 until 1946.

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[154] This problem affected all Alberta swine producers. Wetherell, *Mixed Farmyards in Alberta*, 90.

[155] Canada, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1947, 183.

Figure 5-11

Product Value/Farm in Census Div. 15

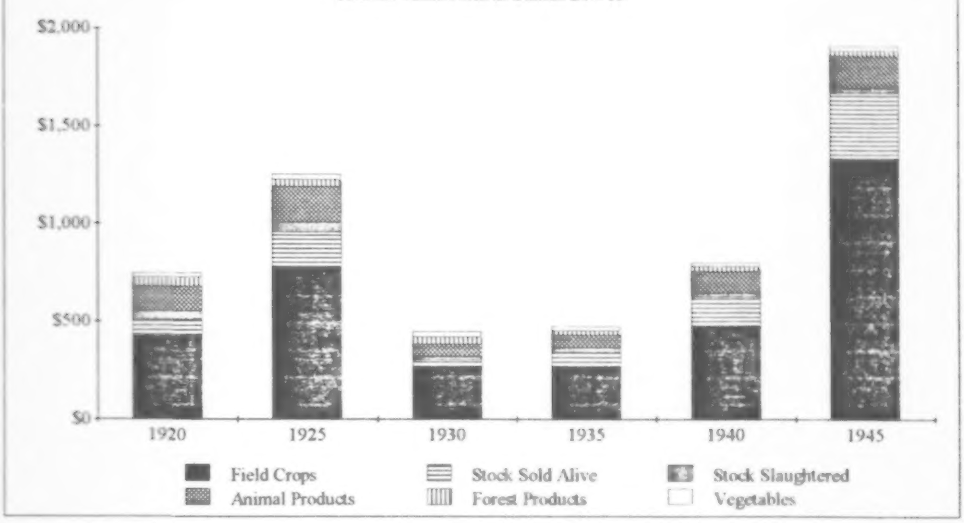
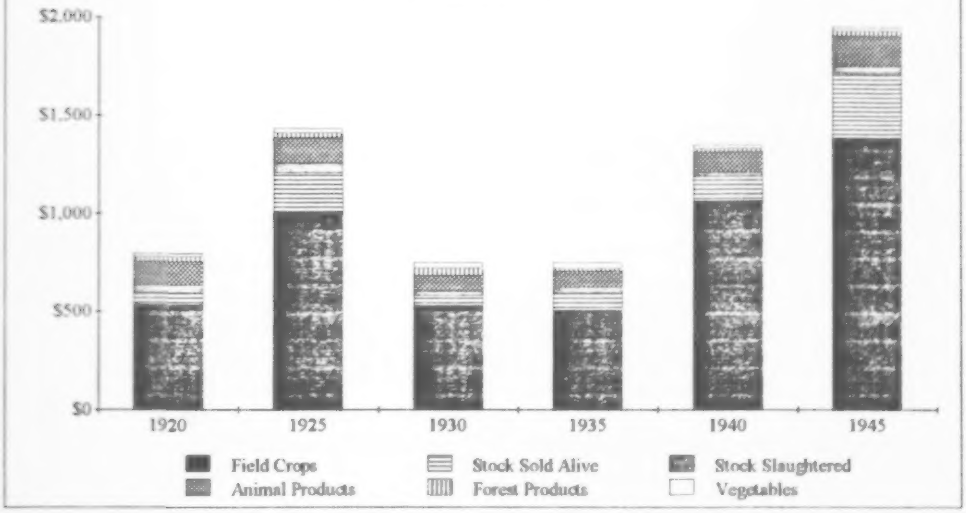


Figure 5-12

Product Value/Farm in Census Div. 16



Revenues for Peace River farms reflected the mixed farm economy and few farms received income from a single source. In Appendix 2, Figures 1 and 2 provide a detailed breakdown of revenue for 1940. In Census Division 16 wheat was the dominant crop and 80% of farms reported income derived for wheat. Over 40% of farms reported income from other crops, from cattle, and from swine respectively, and nearly 30% from dairy sources. The decreased importance of wheat in Census Division 15 where grey-wooded soils predominate and in Census Division 10 where several points were more than 150 kilometres from the railhead, is the only significant variation from the pattern in Division 16. In each area, livestock provided a significant, although not dominant element of the farms' income. The large other farm revenue source indicated for Census Division 15 is attributable to forest products.

A mixed farm economy does not mean that all Peace River farms grew wheat, coarse grains, and forage crops, and kept cattle, swine, dairy cows and poultry. Throughout the region, a diversity of farm types emerged. Without access to the manuscript census returns, it is impossible to generate a statistical illustration of the diversity, but even municipal crop growing patterns symbolise the differentiation. Map 18 and Map 19 illustrate the intra-regional variations in crop selection. In the degraded black and transitional grey-wooded soils of the Spirit River and Berwyn/Fairview prairies where farmers had difficulty obtaining water for livestock, wheat had become the dominant crop. Red Bobs or Thatcher grown in these areas had a moderately high protein content and frost conditions meant a reasonable chance of harvesting a mature crop existed. In the CLI class 2 and 3 soils of the Grande Prairie district, a mixed grain system with large proportions of the farm devoted to wheat and oats existed. Water in these regions was easily obtained and the oats served as a feed for livestock and a cash crop. In the grey-wooded transitional and grey-wooded soil zones, I.D. 738, I.D. 766, I.D. 772, and I.D. 796, wheat acreage was reduced and a larger percentage of acreage devoted to oats and hay production. The large level of oats production in I.D. 765 and I.D. 771 can be attributed to the dairy operations in these districts. In each area, market conditions, climate, and soils had combined to produce a pattern of crop selection.

The overarching desire of Peace River farmers to improve the financial returns of agriculture forced them to change, but the farm community's adaptation to the environmental conditions in the Peace Country had taken thirty years of experimentation. Although Peace River farmers had set out to fulfill the image of the Peace River region as a prosperous wheat growing district, they had proved willing to use scientific study and experiment with new crops, with new farm techniques, and with livestock production. As they made modifications to their agricultural practices, the regional residents came to understand the limitations of their new home. In this process, they slowly came to identify with region and the opportunities it offered. The process of adaptation, however, led to weakness in the Peace River economy. It stayed in the pioneer stage of development throughout the period of study. This long struggle to adapt to the distinctive regional environment would be reflected in all areas of regional economic development.

Chapter 6
The Continued Search for Empire: Farmers, Merchants, Speculators and the Pioneer Economy of the Peace River Country

Unjigah. Its valley appeared to offer unlimited resource potential. The river had tremendous potential as a power source for future development. Its large flow of water and descent through the narrow Rocky Mountain canyon would be harnessed for electrical power at some future date. Klondike bound prospectors had discovered gold in the sand bars in the river channel, and many believed a mother-load existed in the upper reaches of the river. At various points along the river's course, coal seams could be seen in the valley walls suggesting mining opportunities. On the islands in the river, tar, oil, and gas escaped from the ground. This potential for future development characterised the entire region. The newly arrived Euro-Canadian farmers and merchants, like those who settled in the southern prairies, the northern plains, or the dry-lands of the interior United States, intended to profit from the potential wealth and create a modern, commercial, agrarian economy.[1] They had few visions of a subsistence or pastoral, yeoman lifestyle. Farmers sought to reap financial gain through crop production and land speculation. Urban merchants intended to service a prosperous farm community. The weak mixed farm economy which emerged in the Peace River environment, however, hindered the fulfilment of their aspirations. The northern environment, the distance from the metropolitan market, the Depression, and the settlement process, all restricted the development of commercial agriculture. As a result, the agricultural economy in the Peace River country maintained several elements of a pioneer region, and the boosterism and speculation which characterised the pioneer stage never died. The regional community continued to look forward, and the potential for wealth based upon a healthy mixed farming economy and resource exploitation became an integral component of the Peace River identity.

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[1] Paul Voisey and Lyle Dick in Canada, and Donald Worster and Paula Nelson in the United States all concluded that the capitalist ethos and its drive to establish commercial agriculture was the primary objective of western settlement. Voisey, *Vulcan*, Part II. Dick, *"Farmers Making Good"*, Chapter 5 and 6. Worster, *Dust Bowl*, Introduction and Chapter 5. Nelson, *After the West was Won*, Chapter 1. For a review of the literature on the Canadian farmer as a businessman see Ian MacPherson and John Herd Thompson, "Prairie Farmers and the Adoption of Business Methods, 1880-1950," in Francis and Palmer, ed., *The Prairie West*, (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992), 475-96. The entrepreneurial instinct amongst farmers in the United States had been traced into the late nineteenth century. See Adam Ward Rome, "American Farmers as Entrepreneurs, 1870-1900," *Agricultural History* 56 (January, 1982), 37-49. Doug Owram's work on the Canadian expansionists *Promise of Eden* suggests that the capitalist ethos and the drive for material gain had a similar impact in the metropolitan community.

Agriculture was the most reliable sector of the regional economy, but even in this sector significant weakness existed. Work on the Vulcan and Abernethy areas of the prairies suggests a robust agricultural sector can be recognised by: an increase in farm size and consequential decrease in the total number of farms; an increase in combined owner-tenant land tenure; an increase in the mechanisation of farm production; an increase in levels of farm debt; and an increase in land and farm values.[2] In all of these areas, the Peace River country lagged considerably behind the Alberta average. Although significant diversity existed in the region, the Census data suggests that the overall agricultural economy remained at a pioneer stage.

As would be expected, the number of farms in the region (Figure 6-1) increased with each settlement wave, reaching its peak in 1931. The great majority of these new farms were 160 acres in size.[3] Given the experience in the southern prairies, in a prosperous agricultural economy farmers would increase their land holdings and the number of farms would decline with the maturity of the agricultural economy. Following the end of intense settlement, however, the number of farms in the Peace River region remained relatively stable. Figure 6-1 also illustrates the dominance of Census Division 16 in the agricultural economy of the Peace region. As late as 1931, it contained more

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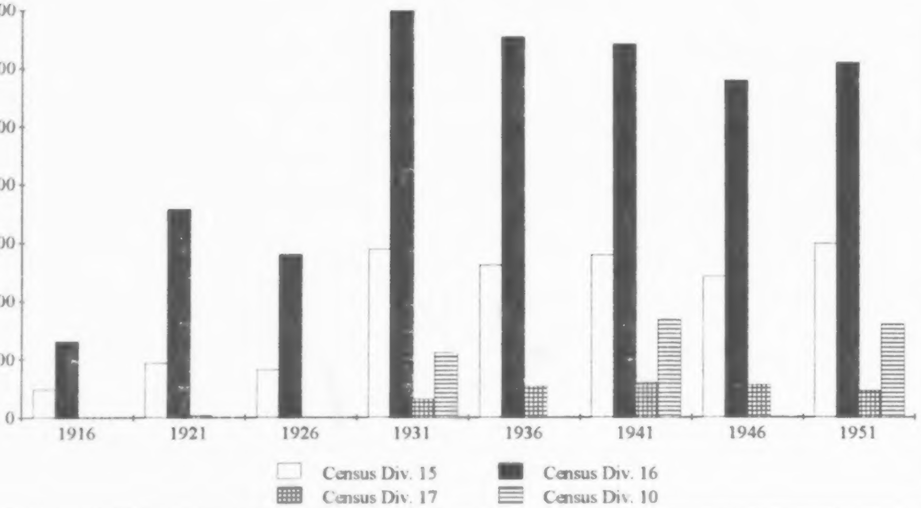
[2] R.W. Murchie's work in the 1930s is the source for this model of agricultural activity. See Murchie, *Agricultural Progress*, (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1935) and C.A. Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 72-4. Both Voisey and Dick utilise these concepts when discussing agricultural economy. See Voisey, *Vulcan*, 37-43, 129-38, 141-44, 150-52, and Dick, *"Farmers' Making Good"*, 82-90, 93-5.

[3] See *Supra* Chapter 4 and Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 98.

Figure 6-1

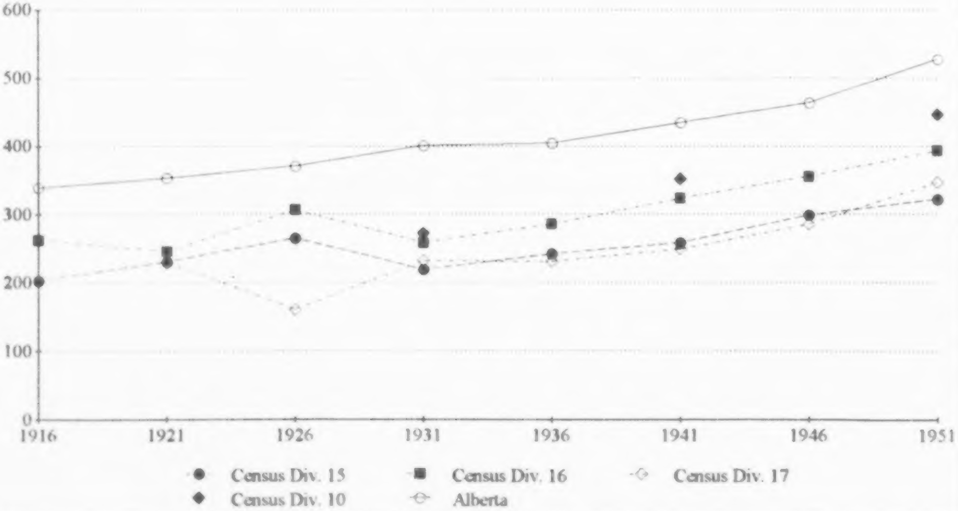
Number of Farms



than one half of all the farms in the Peace River country. In this Census Division, the area of most early settlement in the region, a decline in the number of farms did occur, but this decline was marginal. Does this mean farmers failed to expand their holdings in the Peace River region?

Figure 6-2

Acreage Farm



An examination of average farm size illustrates that a modest expansion did occur (Figure 6-2). Since some settlers in the 1911 to 1912 period made use of the 320 acre South African scrip in the settlement process, farms averaged more than 160 acres from the outset of settlement. Still, the average farm in Census Division 15 and 16 only grew from 200 to 320 and 260 to 400 acres respectively between 1916 and 1951. Thus farms in the Peace River region remained smaller than the Alberta average. This slow expansion and below average farm size is partially explained by the continued entry of new settlers. During periods of intensive settlement such as 1926 to 1931, the average farm size actually decreased slightly as new 160 acre farms were created. But the data also suggests that expanding the size of a farm in the Peace River region proved difficult.

In the southern prairies, farmers expanded their holdings by purchasing: their neighbour's land; Dominion school land; Hudson's Bay Company land; or railway lands in the district. The HBC and the Dominion school lands, however, were often held off the market until land prices inflated. The railway, on the other hand, offered land quickly and cheaply in order to increase traffic on its lines. Homesteaders also seemed willing to part with their lands quickly following patent. In the Vulcan area, Voisey suggests that many homesteaders could be best regarded as real estate speculators. He notes many sought to achieve the "goal of moving in, acquiring land, selling out, and leaving."[4] In the Peace River region, fewer sources of land for expansion existed.

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[4] The work on land sales is voluminous. For the best information on school land sales see Morton, *Dominion Lands*, 343. On the sale of the CPR railway lands in the southern prairies, J.B. Hedges, *Building the Canadian West* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1939) is essential reading. For a look at Voisey's interpretation see, *Vulcan*, 41-51. The most controversial element of land sales involves speculators. Early work emphasised the nefarious nature of speculators and concluded they were a unhealthy element of the pioneer communities. See for example Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 39. A similar attitude has been shown towards the urban booster community by Alan Artibise, "Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities, 1871-1913," in *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development*, Alan Artibise, ed., (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1981), 209-35. Voisey's work and other studies on this subject has partially revised the negative view of speculators. This work suggests speculators provided useful propaganda for the new districts, and brought order to a disordered world. See R.P. Swierenga, "Land Speculation and Its Impact on American

Large blocks of railway land had never been created in the region, and the limited land granted to the HBC in 1925 consisted primarily of bush lands along the settlement fringe. Farmers in the Peace, consequently, had to purchase a homesteader-speculator's farm or school lands.

The homesteader/speculator thus became the primary source of land for farm expansion during the initial homestead period. Next to agriculture, speculation was the most important economic activity in the Peace River region. The unscrupulous urban speculation at Dunvegan and Grouard has been documented on several occasions. In 1912, boosters advertised Grouard as the hub of five separate railway projects and claimed the town had a population in excess of 1000 with two miles of sidewalks in place. Better known than Grouard, the Dunvegan land boom of 1913-14 is a classic speculative adventure. Dunvegan was advertised as the "city of the north" with paved streets, bridges and steam boats plying the river. In reality, Dunvegan consisted of a few buildings in the valley flanked by the steep hills.[5] In their studies of the Peace River region, both Zaslow and Dawson argue that widespread speculation in agricultural lands also occurred. They argue real estate speculators were amongst the first into the Peace River country and they remained an important element of the economy. Zaslow even calls the degree of speculation remarkable.[6]

These homesteader-speculators could also be bonafide settlers in their own right. Pierre Gauvreau and R.M. Patterson, for example, could be considered both speculators and settlers, although their circumstances varied substantially. Patterson lived on his

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Economic Growth and Welfare: A Historiographic Review," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 8 (1977), 294-8.

[5] Gordon Reid, *Around the Lower Peace*, (High Level, Lower Peace Publishing, 1978), 23-9. Nicholson, *Heart of Gold*, 7. PAA, Acc. 71.402, Dunvegan Land Boom.

[6] Zaslow lists five separate agencies controlling at least 100,000 acres each in the Peace Country. Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 231-6. Carl Dawson *Settlement of the Peace*, 39. Some of these settlement companies did not successfully establish settlers and eventually lost their lands. See for example, the case of the Peace River Colonization and Land Development Company in Dave Leonard, "The Great Peace River Land Scandal," *Alberta History* 39 (Spring 1991), 9-16.

homestead for three years and built a good quality house on the site. Yet he was not convinced that his homestead at Battle River would become his home. In a letter to his mother he wrote:

> No, I don't intend to live here always. But I want to have this place for my own -- partly as a standby in case of adversity. When I have put in the time and work on it, it passes to me right out and it would always be a home in case of need. Or in after years I can sell it, when the country is opened up and always get my money back on it and more, to say nothing of the new health and all the experience I have gained from it.[7]

Gauvreau claimed a quarter section in the vicinity of Peace River Crossing, and constantly faced threats of cancellation because he had only a tent on the land as a dwelling and worked in the town as a telegraph operator.[8] Gauvreau clearly intended to make the Peace Country his home, but did not intend to farm. The lands claimed by men like Gauvreau and Patterson became the largest segment of land available for expansion.

Land speculation, nevertheless, was not a reliable vehicle for farm expansion. Like all forms of speculation, it followed the economic cycle and thus hindered the growth of farms. As the economy improved and land values inflated, speculators participated in the purchase and sale of farm property. Rumours of a land boom and inflated value for land came with every subsequent rush of settlers. In 1913, only three years after homesteading commenced in the North Peace, Pierre Gauvreau reported that some people were receiving $5-6000 for their patented quarter sections.[9] While many homesteaders were willing to part with their lands under these conditions, the post-war recession, the decline in wheat prices, and the deflation of land values stopped the expansion of farms in the Peace River country at a critical point.[10] By the time economic conditions improved in 1926, competition between new settlers and established farmers drove land prices to absurd and prohibitive values. Land values in the older districts increased dramatically peaking at approximately $40 to $50 per acre for a developed farm. At this point, the Dominion government sold its school lands at prices approaching $20 per acre.[11] The demand for land continued into the 1930s, and, despite a 50% deflation between 1929 and 1932, the Canadian National Railway's settlement branch concluded that land values in the Peace River country were still vastly inflated.[12] Under these conditions, the amendments to the homestead provisions in 1927 allowing farmers to acquire a second homestead, and the Alberta lands act of 1931 provisions allowing wives to homestead became an essential source of land for expansion. These efforts at farm enlargement, however, affected only a small proportion of Peace River farmers.

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[7] PABC, R.M. Patterson Papers, Box 3, File 7, Patterson to Lady Scott, May 4, 1926.

[8] PAA, Pierre Gauvreau Papers, Acc. 66.135, G6, Gauvreau to C.H. Enderton, July 2, 1913 and July 31, 1913.

[9] PAA, Gauvreau Papers, Acc. 66.135, G6, Gauvreau to Enderton, September 11, 1913.

The combination of limited access to land and prohibitive prices created a diversity of experiences in the Peace River region. Figure 6-2 displays the substantial differences in farm size between the census divisions. Farm size in Census Division 16 always surpassed that in Division 15, while farm size in B.C. Census Division 10 surpassed both. The time of settlement, the soil quality, crop selection, and relative degree of forested land prior to settlement all affected farm size. In Division 16, early settlement in the black transitional soil zone and a greater emphasis on wheat production led farmers to begin to expand their holdings prior to 1921. In Census Division 15 the predominance of grey-wooded soils and the importance of oats and forage crop production, resulted in smaller farms. A different set of circumstances explain the larger farms in the B.C. region. Settlement in the Peace River Block never reached the critical point where it moved onto the forested grey-wooded soil zones. Settlement in the district thus remained confined to the isolated islands of open prairie and black-transitional soils throughout the Block. The large number of dried out southern prairie farmers in B.C., and their experience with larger farms also helps explain the importance of large farms.

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[10] *Record*, February 16, 1917, November 30, 1917, April 26, 1918, January 9, 1920, and September 29, 1921.

[11] The first indications of an increased demand for land came in 1925. In March 1927, a 320 acre farm around Vanrena sold for $11000 or $35 per acre. By 1929, according to W.D. Albright, prices had risen to the $40 per acre range depending upon improvements and distance to transportation. Raw land also increased in value. Early in 1928, raw land appeared to be selling for between $10 and $12 per acre, but many protested that this was abysmally low. The school land sales in the summer demonstrated that land values were inflating rapidly. *Record*, March 5, 1925, March 26, 1925, April 9, 1925, March 3, 1927, May 18, 1928 and July 20, 1928. NAC, RG 17, B.II.A., vol. 2849, file 1-40-1, "Answers to Common Questions About the Peace River Country," September 1932.

[12] NAC, RG 30, Vol. 5611, J.P. Martin to F.B. Kirkwood, May 24, 1932, and CNR Land Settlement Branch to E.H. Gurton (St. Paul, Minnesota), June 8, 1932. This volume includes several farm listings with prices ranging from $1000 for 160 acres of prairie near Beaverlodge to $9000 for a developed 356 acre farm north of Wembley.

Although the average farm size illustrated by Figure 6-2 remained below the Alberta average and expansion occurred slowly, it underestimates the continued importance of one-quarter and one-half section farms.[13] Maps 14 and 15 "Size of Farms," (Appendix 3) show that nearly two thirds of all farms in the Peace country remained less than three quarter sections (480 acres) in size as late as 1946. Those districts in Census Division 15 -- I.D.'s 125, 126, 130, and 131 -- have a marginally larger number of farms 200 acres or less (thus representing one-quarter section farms) and at least 75% of the farms in these regions contain less than three quarter sections. Notice that a significant number of farms greater than 640 acres exist only in the older settled zones of Census Division 16: M.D. 127, M.D. 133, M.D. 135, and M.D. 136. The difficulty experienced enlarging a farm meant one third of the farms in most districts remained less than 200 acres at the end of World War Two.[14]

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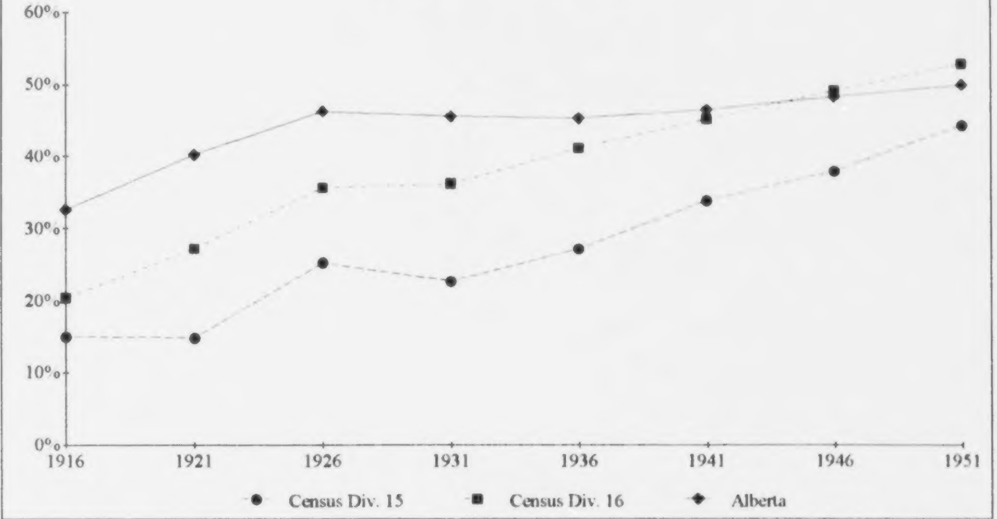
[13] The published census information makes studying farm size in Western Canada difficult. In 1946, for example, the Census of the Prairie Provinces provides the number of farms: less than 50 acres, from 51-100 acres, from 101 to 200 acres, from 201 to 299 acres, from 300 to 479 acres, from 480 to 639 acres, and 640 acres or more. Most prairie farmers report the size of their farm in quarter sections (160 acre lots) and only the last two categories of the Census make sense in this regard. Reporting it in the form of the Census, however, does not make sense either. In the ranges 1 to 50 acres, 51 to 100 acres, and 201 to 299 acres, few farms are reported.

The inability or unwillingness of some Peace River farmers to acquire more land does not suggest that farm size remained static. Farmers throughout the Peace River country used alternative methods to increase their farm holdings. They improved acreage on their farms faster than the Alberta average and cropped a larger percentage of this land (Figures 6-3 and 6-4). The landscape prior to settlement affected this aspect of farm development. In Census Division 16, settlers occupied land covered primarily by prairie grasses during the first settlement wave; in Census Division 15, a greater proportion of the early settlers found the land covered by light scrub brush. Hence, the proportion of acreage improved and cropped in Division 16 exceeded that in Division 15 by a substantial margin. Farmers in Division 16 broke more land in the first stages of settlement as they quickly cultivated the open lands. Subsequently, the rate of improvement in the two divisions appears similar as farmers in both areas had to clear land prior to cultivation. Still despite an above average rate of improving their land, by

Figure 6-3

Percentage of Farm Land Improved



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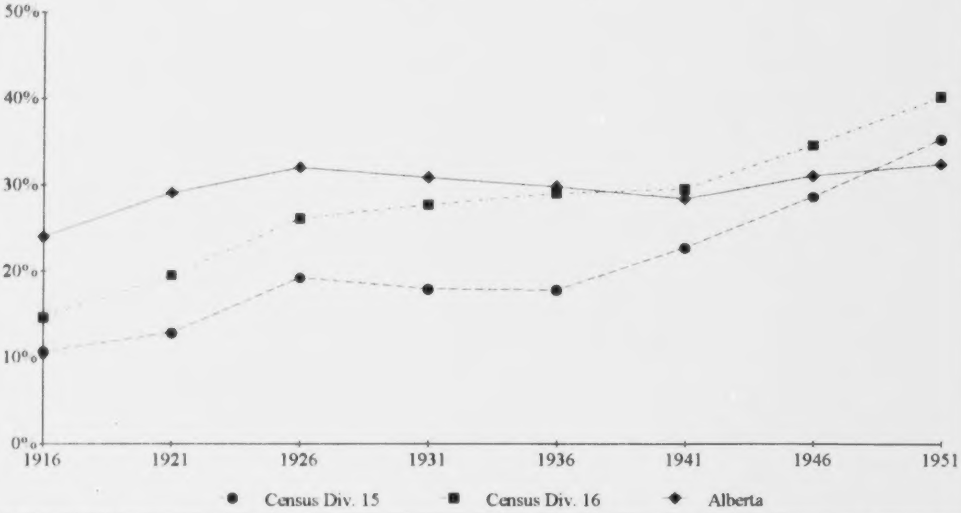
[14] M.D. 136 stands out as an important exception. This area around the community of Fairview had the largest farms in the Peace River region.

1946, less than half of the acreage on an average Peace River farm had been cleared and broken for crops.

Figure 6-4

Percentage of Farm Land in Crops



Once again, the intra-regional variation is significant. In Figures 6-5, 6-6, and 6-7, the average farm size, the average improved acres per farm, and the percentage of land improved are charted for a variety of districts in the Peace River region. Notice that the largest farms exist in the Fairview and Grande Prairie districts (M.D. 739, M.D. 740,

Figure 6-5

Average Farm Size

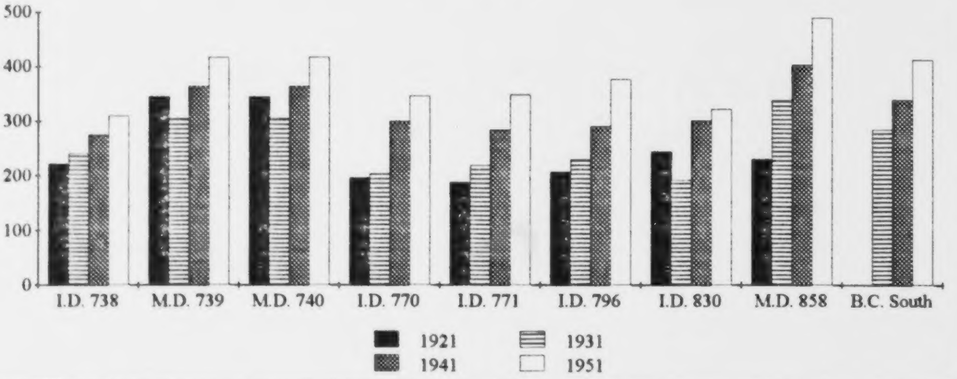


Figure 6-6

Improved Acres Farm

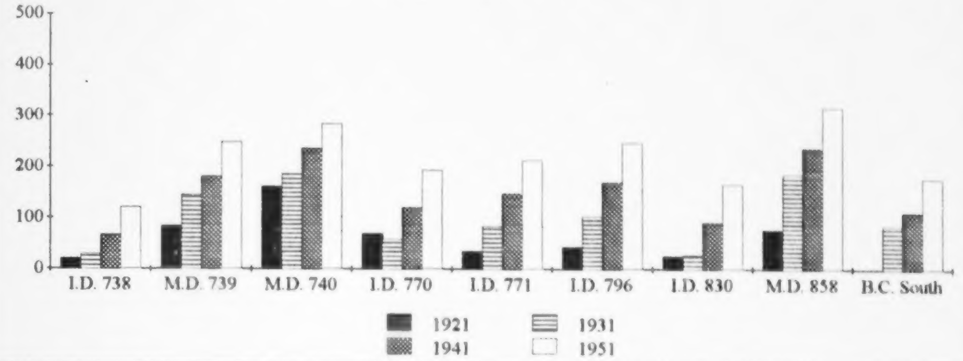
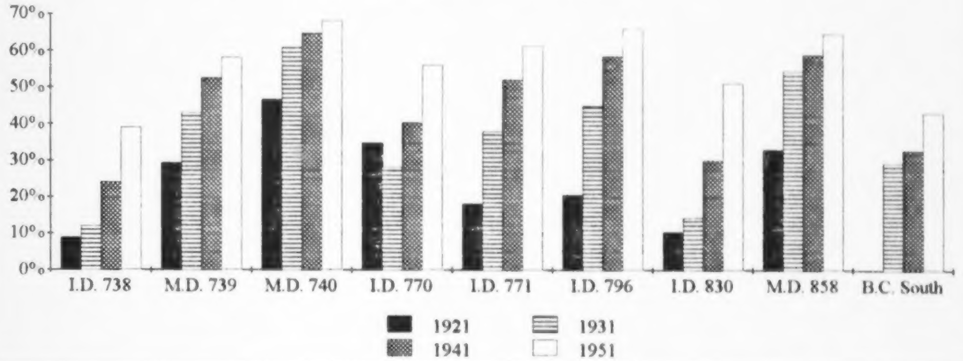


Figure 6-7

Farm Land Improved by Local Districts



See Appendix 2, Table 2 for the raw data on several Peace River municipalities

and M.D. 858) where black soils, wheat farming, prairie landscapes, and early settlement combined. These districts also had the highest levels of improved land from 1921 to 1941. The smallest farms and the smallest improved acreage existed in the bush lands near Debolt and Blueberry Mountain (I.D. 738 and 830). Here, settlement occurred well into the 1930s and farmers were forced to clear the land before they could break it. The districts, moreover, had grey-wooded soils and thus oats and forage crop production remained important. In between these two extremes were the transitional zones of first class grey-wooded soil and light forest coverage. Farm size in these areas remained at median levels, and they demonstrated a rapid improvement in land between 1921 and

1931. By 1951, all of the districts had improved 40% of the farm land and differences were beginning to disappear.

Improvement meant clearing and breaking the natural landscape. In Figures 6-8 and 6-9, the condition of land in Census Division 15 and 16 is charted. The solid black markers indicate the improved land and its condition, while the hollow markers indicate unimproved or natural landscapes on the farm. Notice the steady increase in all three elements of improved land. The predominance of new breaking must be recognised when discussing fallowed acres. Dawson and Murchie claimed half of a Peace River farm's fallowed land in 1930 could be attributed to breaking.[15] Even in the older settled districts of the Grande Prairie and the Fairview/Berwyn prairie, new breaking continued throughout the period of study. Map 18 (Appendix 3), "Condition of Occupied Land, 1946" illustrates the regional variation. The cultivated acreage on farms ranged from roughly 50% in the older settled districts to 25% in I.D. 126, I.D. 131, and I.D. 139. By making comparison with Map 19, "Condition of Occupied Land, Peace River Block of B.C., 1941" it is clear that time of settlement and quality of the soil combined to produce the intra-regional diversity.

The continued settlement process in the Peace River region, and the slow expansion of farms had an impact on land tenure. R.W. Murchie argued that a combined owner-tenant system of land tenure symbolised the modern agrarian economy. In prosperous times, farm operations expanded and the capital requirements of farming increased. Farmers during these periods needed to increase their land holdings but could not afford to purchase. As a result, they rented a neighbour's land on a crop-share basis or occasionally for cash payment.[16] In the Peace River region, however, this pattern appears to have been disrupted. While tenancy did increase in the Peace River region

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[15] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 80.

[16] Murchie suggested a complex relationship between tenancy and climate, soil quality, land values, and ethnicity, but he argued that the desire to expand a farm and the cost of purchasing land were the most important elements. Murchie, *Agricultural Progress*, 118-25. Dick, *Farmers "Making Good,"* 93-5. Voisey, *Vulcan*, 135-37.

Figure 6-8

Condition of Farm Land, Census Div. 15

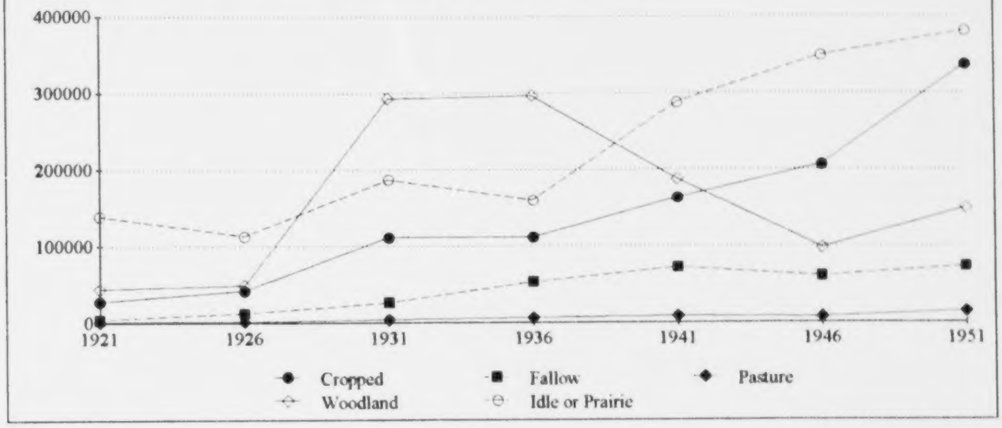
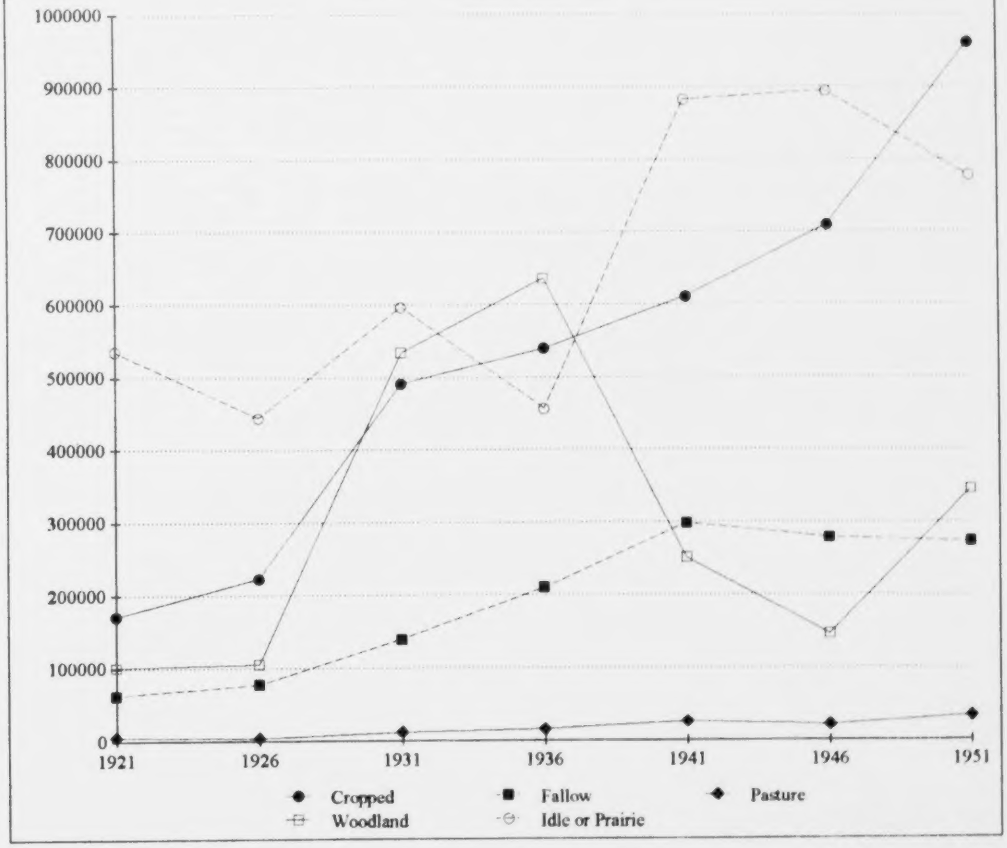


Figure 6-9

Condition of Farm Land, Census Div. 16



See Appendix 2, Table 4 for raw statistical data on Census Division 16

Figure 6-10

Farm Operators in Census Div. 15

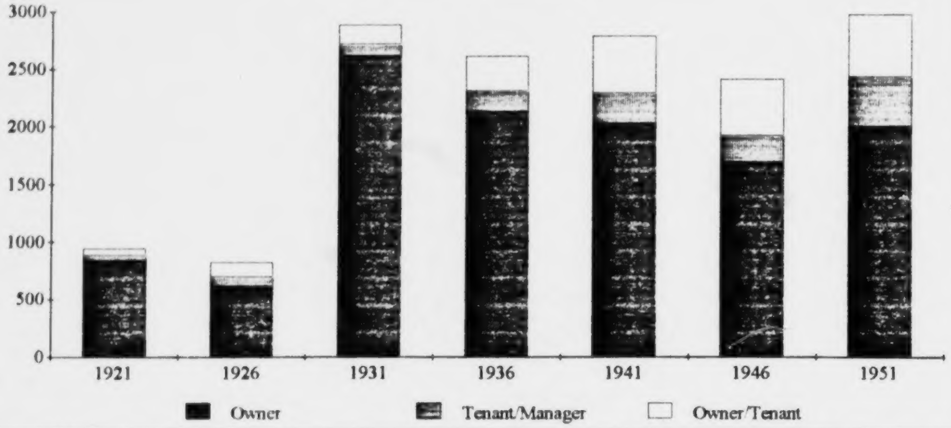
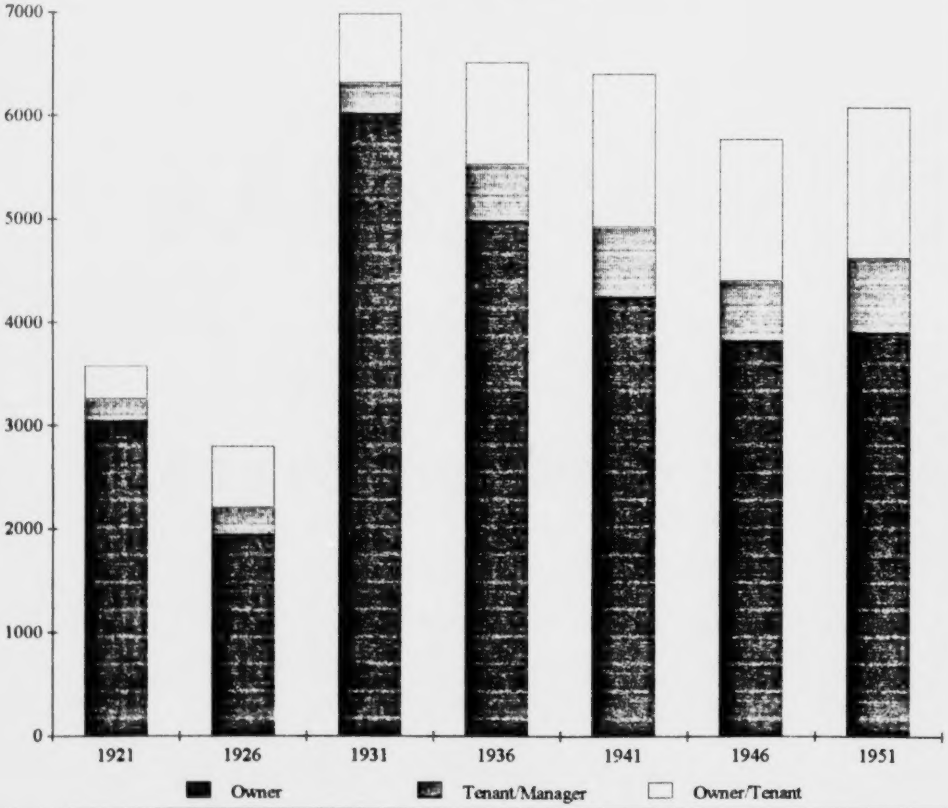


Figure 6-11

Farm Operators in Census Div. 16



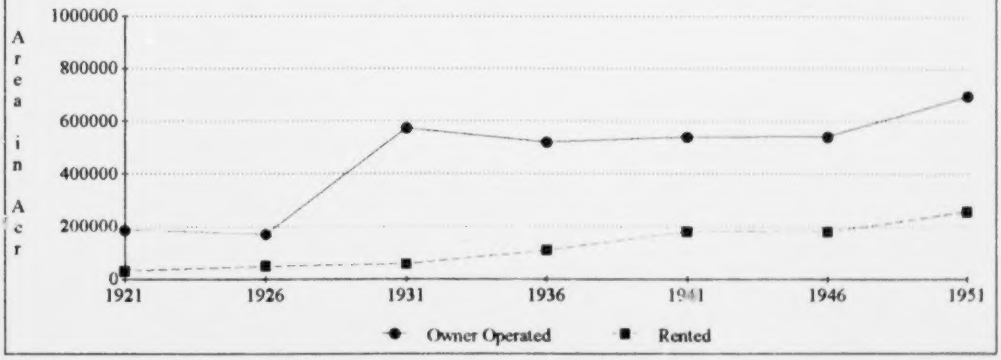
See Appendix 2, Table 4 for the raw data on Census Division 16 between 1921 and 1926 and between 1936 and 1941 (Figure 6-10 and 6-11), it never reached the Alberta average and did not symbolise a prosperous agricultural economy.

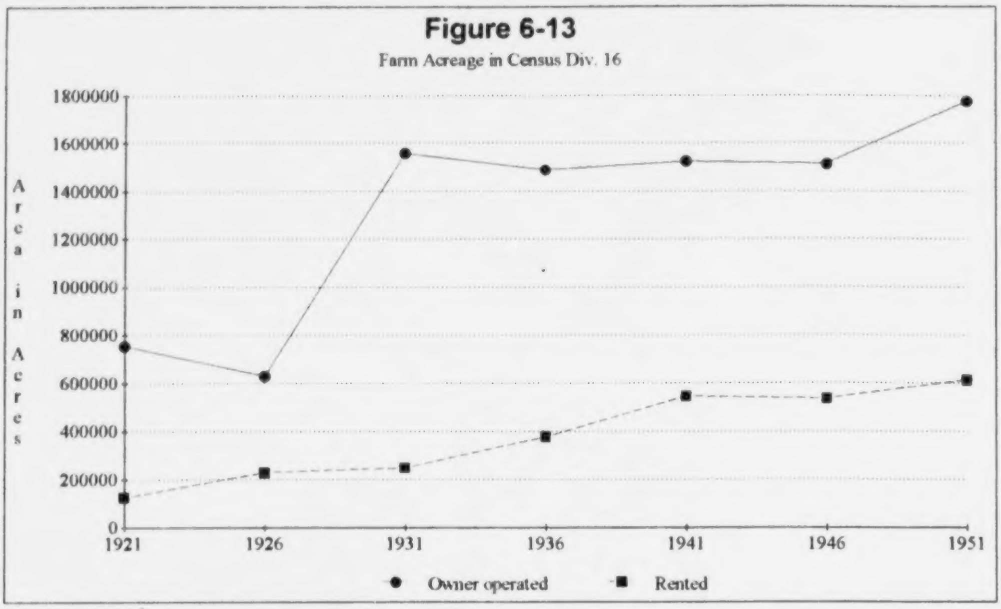
Two considerations help explain low levels of tenancy in the Peace River region. First, a relationship existed between farm size, land tenure, and time of settlement. A comparison of the data in Appendix 3, Maps 14, 16, and 18 shows that larger farms, with more owner-tenant operators existed in the older settled districts. In the fringe settlement areas and in the Peace River Block, continued homesteading and small farms resulted in fewer owner-tenant farmers. Second, in both the periods of increased tenancy, a severe recession rather than economic growth had occurred. The recession led to farm abandonment throughout the region, and only during this period did a pool of land for rental exist. The census reporting period in both cases captured the beginning of a cycle of economic growth. Few farmers had cash for purchasing a farm during these years, but economic conditions in the region were improving, and large numbers of Peace River farms were vacant. Tenancy was the natural outcome of this situation. Since many Peace River farmers expanded their farms by improving rather than purchasing land, and settlement continued into the 1930s, it is not surprising that ownership continued to be the dominant form of land tenure at a regional level.

The mixed farm economy, the below average size of Peace River farms, the continued improvement of land, and the predominance of ownership as a form of land tenure all help explain the process of mechanisation on a Peace River farm. Most Peace River farmers owned at least some mechanical equipment. A survey of auction notices

Figure 6-12

Acreage Owned and Rented in Div. 15





in the *Peace River Record* indicates that many farmers in the Berwyn-Fairview area owned at least one plough for breaking (breaking prairie sod or cleared bush land required different types of ploughs; thus many owned two), and another plough or discer for cultivating their fields. Some farmers also possessed small seeding equipment, harrows (once again farmers would need a regular harrow for field work and a root harrow for newly cleared and broken land), a mower for hay, and possibly a rake. Binders were a sign of wealth and prosperity. By 1931, according to the census information, at least 25% of farmers in Census Division 15 and B.C. Division 10 owned a binder, and in Census Division 16, the proportion reached 40% (Appendix 2, Table 3).[17] Although the Census fails to provide a municipality level breakdown of machinery ownership, the division totals suggest that ownership of binders was much higher in the older settled zones around Fairview, Berwyn, Spirit River, Grande Prairie, and Beaverlodge. In the remote districts of settlement, farmers often teamed up to buy special equipment like seed cleaners, breaking ploughs, or root harrows.[18]

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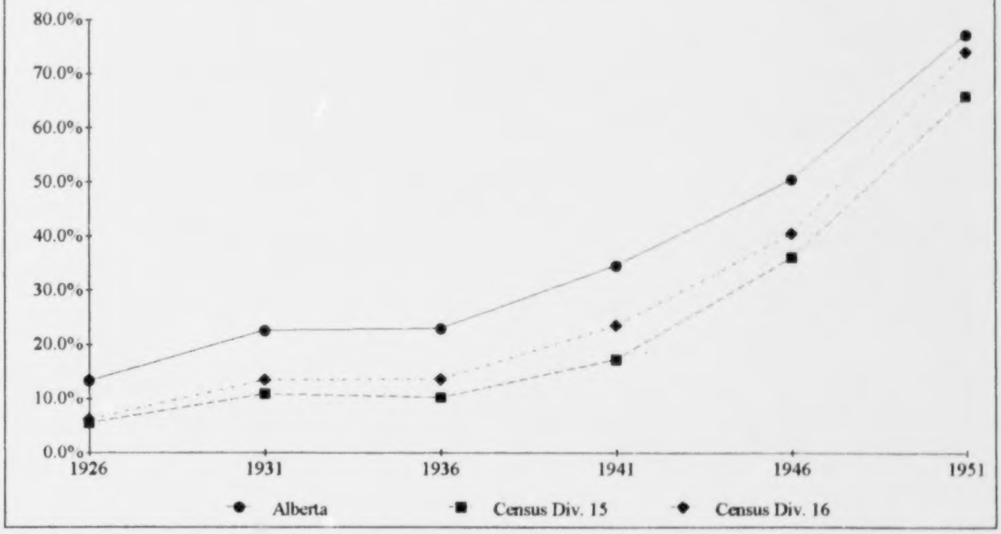
[17] As prosperity returned to the Peace River region in 1926 and 1927, many farmers purchased binders suggesting the importance this piece of equipment had for a farmer. *Sun*, September 10, 1927 and *Province*, May 4, 1930.

Most of this equipment relied upon horses, as the farmers in the Peace River region were slow to adopt tractors. The use of tractors was the most important technological and mechanical change on prairie farms, and in some ways has become the symbol of the modern, prosperous agricultural economy. Some farmers experimented with tractors in the region by the end of World War I. Purchased with government financing assistance, farmers used these tractors primarily to break land.[19] Despite these early experiments, the proportion of farms using tractors in the Peace remained well below the Alberta average until the Second World War (Figure 6-14). Horses, consequently, continued to be used for field work throughout the area.[20]

Figure 6-14

Farms with Tractors



R.W. Murchie pointed out that horses remained important on the frontier because cheap feed production in these areas provided a natural economic advantage to horse farming.[21] In a more recent interpretation, Ankli, Helsburg, and Thompson agree that the cost of purchasing a tractor was the most important issue. They argue that the initial capital outlay for mechanised equipment meant a certain economy of scale had to be achieved before gasoline tractors became an efficient source of traction power. In other words, farm size and the purchasing of tractors were inter-related.[22] The necessity of purchasing new tillage and harvest equipment suitable to tractor farming also affected a farmer's decision. Don Wetherell has noted that in the mixed farm economy, technological obsolescence of farm equipment seldom occurred.[23] Moving to a tractor operation, therefore, entailed the mothballing of otherwise good equipment.

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[18] PAA, Charles Plavin Papers, Acc. 65.92, file 20. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 3, 69.

[19] *Record*, March 15, 1918 and May 24, 1918. The use of tractors for breaking continued into the 1930s. Mary Percy Jackson, *On The Last Frontier*, 100.

[20] Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 70-72.

Voisey has pointed out that the transition to tractors made little sense if horses were still required to transport grain to the elevator; hence, the availability of trucks also affected the use of tractors.[24] Many communities in the region were 100 km or more from the railway, and hauling grain these distances with horse drawn wagons was simply not cost effective. Yet, Figure 6-15 demonstrates that truck ownership in the region did not become significant prior to the Second World War, and fewer than 10% of Peace River farmers had trucks in 1941. This contradiction is explained by the condition of local roads, and the emergence of a small trucking industry in the region.

Road construction had emerged as an issue following the Great War. The depth of the valleys of the Peace River, its tributaries, and the numerous creeks which carved their way down to meet the river, however, made road building in the Peace River region expensive.[25] The Provincial government funded construction of a trunk road system, but the municipal governments had responsibility for building and maintaining local market roads. As late as 1932, therefore, the Peace River region still had inadequate roads. The road network consisted of one graded road connecting all of the major centres of settlement (Appendix 3, Map 23). Cars and trucks could travel between High Prairie and Fort St. John, but they would have to wander north to Peace River and Fairview, then south through Spirit River to Grande Prairie, then north-west through Wembley and Beaverlodge to Dawson Creek, and finally north to Fort St. John. Along this route, the driver crossed the Peace River three times, twice by ferry. Following the second settlement wave, the trunk road system was extended to new settlement districts through the construction of an ungraded short-cut between High Prairie and Grande Prairie and another ungraded road between Grimshaw and Notikewin. This earthen trunk road system was passable when dry, difficult when wet. On several occasions, outlying districts were cut-off from supply centres by washed out roads, and cars were often stuck

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[21] Murchie, *Agricultural Progress*, 329.

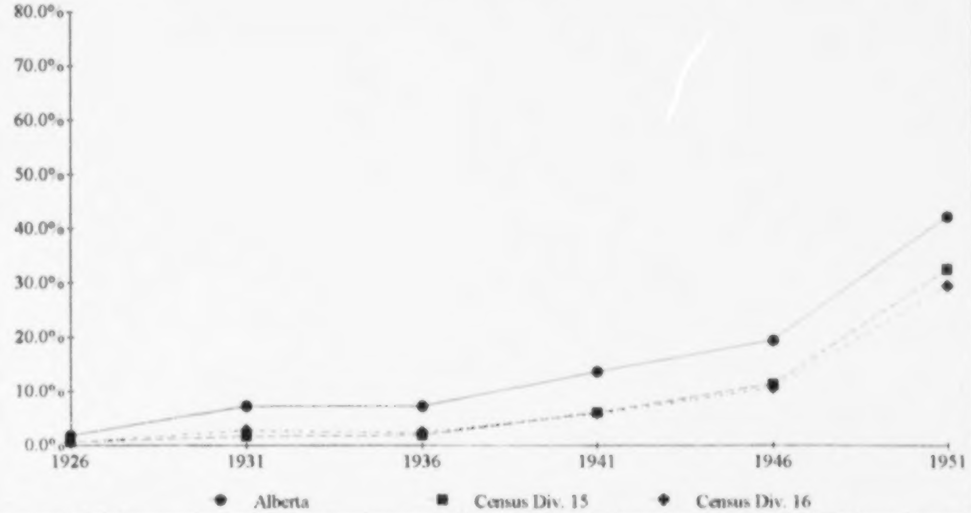
[22] Robert Ankli, Dan Helsburg and John Herd Thompson, "The Adoption of the Gasoline Tractor in Western Canada," in Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, (Gananoque: Langdale, 1980), 12-18. Voisey, *Vulcan*, 141-44.

[23] Wetherell, *Mixed Farmyards in Alberta*, 116-7.

[24] Voisey, *Vulcan*, 143-4. Ankli, "The Adoption," 16.

Figure 6-15

Farms with Trucks



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[25] GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 8, A.H. McQuarrie, "Now it Can Be Told: Bridges."

on the hillsides of the Peace or Smoky River valley following a rainstorm.[26] More importantly for farmers, the Provincial government made no effort to keep the road clear from winter snow.[27] The trunk road system, consequently, could not be relied upon for truck traffic.

Local market roads were even worse. Road issues dominated local meetings in many settlements. Settlers expressed concern about the inability to market grain and demanded assistance. Some settlers took matters into their own hands. The Braden brothers, for instance, constructed a crossing of the Pouce Coupé river in 1923 to improve access between Spirit River and Rolla.[28] Despite this type of initiative, the local market roads were little more than trails. Few of the Municipal or Local Improvement Districts had a tax base large enough to embark on extensive road building programs. In the 1930s, I.D. 771, the well developed district around Beaverlodge, usually had about $400 available for road construction. A single bridge could cost $400.[29] These problems did not stop farmers, especially in the fringe areas away from the railway, from demanding improved roads and the jobs road building would create.[30] In a way, the

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[26] PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 61, Petition from Wanham District, July 8, 1927. PABC, Grossman Papers, Add.MSS 104, file 2, "Vignettes," 23. W.L. Morton, *God' Galloping Girl*, 10. David Halldin, "Pioneering in Alberta's Peace River Country," 43-4. Ellis, "Where Farms Meet Frontiers," *Beaver*, (September 1941), 47. *Record*, July 19, 1935, October 2, 1936, and October 25, 1940. *Block News*, September 18, 1941.

[27] The closure of the road during the winter created a major obstacle for truck traffic. Despite efforts by the local community to keep the route clear, however, this problem continued until World War Two. *Record*, January 22, 1932, January 13, 1933, December 18, 1936, and February 24, 1939.

[28] PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3523, A.H. McQuarrie to P.N. Johnson, February 14, 1924.

[29] GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 8, A.H. McQuarrie, "Money (and other) Matters. PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 60, A.H. McQuarrie to N.W. Macpherson, March 14, 1927.

[30] For just one example of this campaign, see the letters from the Wanham and Bad Heart district in PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3512.

Depression actually helped Peace River develop adequate roads. Relief workers built many of these roads in lieu of municipal taxes. As a result, a system of roads capable of handling limited truck traffic emerged just before World War Two.

The limitations on truck traffic and the reliance upon horses for basic transportation meant tractors never became an important element of the farm prior to World War Two. A few farmers did purchase tractors in the Peace River region as economic conditions improved in the late 1920s and farms in the older settled districts grew in size. Tractor companies opened operations throughout the Peace country and the number of farmers using tractors doubled. A Stoney Lake farmer claimed that "tractor farming is coming to the fore in the district," but those tractors in the Peace River region continued to be used primarily for breaking.[31] Tractor ownership, moreover, remained significantly below the levels reported by Dick in the Qu'Appelle district of Saskatchewan or Voisey in Vulcan.[32] The Depression had stopped the transition to a modern, mechanised agricultural economy. The improvement of grain prices in the late 1930s and good harvests in 1936 and 1937 finally restored this initiative and farmers turned to tractors once again. Still, less than 20% of Peace River farmers (23% in Census Division 16) had tractors in 1941.[33]

As tractors became more popular, trucks also made modest inroads. On farms close to the railway, horse-drawn wagons continued to be used, but trucks began to haul grain from the Pouce Coupé, Battle River, and Fort St. John districts in the late 1920s.[34] At first, private contractors conducted most of this work. Only during the Second World

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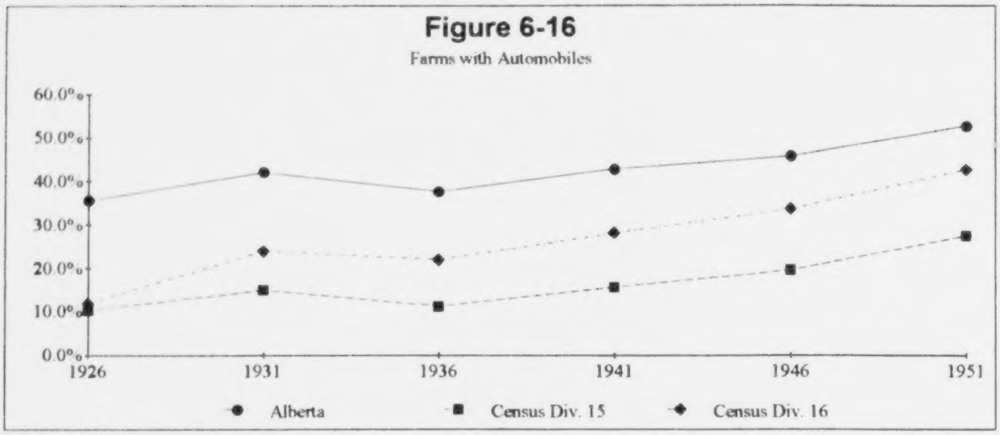
[31] *Record*, March 8, 1929, March 15, 1929, November 8, 1929, January 17, 1930, and October 31, 1930. Alberta, *Agriculture: Annual Report*, 1929, 61-2.

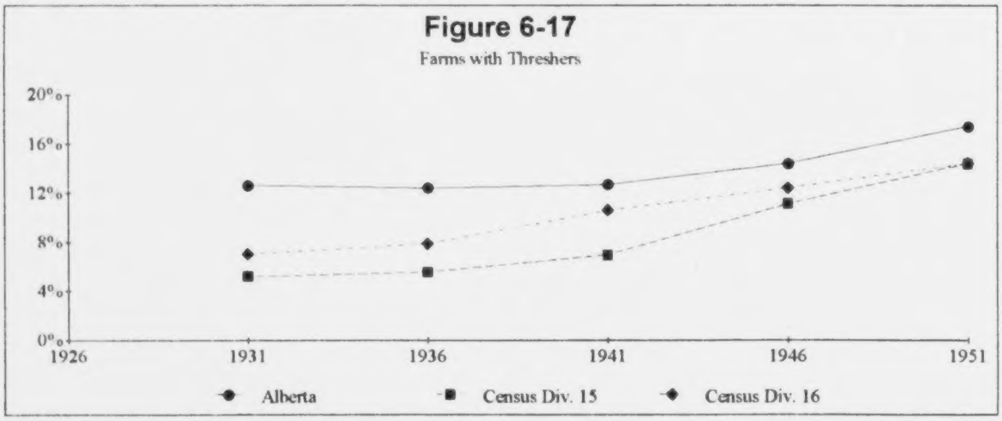
[32] Nearly 50% of the farmers around Lemburg and Grenfell and 65% of the farmers around Indian Head and Balcarres owned tractors by 1933. Dick, *Farmers "Making Good,"* 93. Voisey noted 40% of Vulcan area farmers had tractors by 1931. Voisey, *Vulcan*, Figure 23, 141.

[33] *Block News*, May 12, 1938.

[34] A fleet of 173 trucks hauled grain from the Pouce Coupé region. *Province*, May 18, 1930.



War did farmers begin purchase trucks to haul their grain. During the war, then, farmers replaced their horses with cars, trucks, and tractors. This transformation reflected both the increased prosperity in the region due to the war and the shortage of agricultural labour. Between 1941 and 1946, the proportion of farms throughout the region reporting tractors virtually doubled and for the first time approached the Alberta average.



Few farmers owned threshing equipment. It required a large capital investment in equipment and labour. Mechanised threshing existed throughout the Peace, nevertheless. Although flails had been used by the early Peace River settlers, most districts had a few threshing machines in them by the end of World War 1.[35] Farmers then hired these custom threshing crews rather than purchase the expensive equipment. Threshers often met in a central location to set rates and then charged farmers according to the number of bushels threshed.[36] The use of custom threshers helps to explain the large number of farmers employing temporary labour in the district. Although residents reported combines in the countryside in 1928, this equipment was virtually unused in the Peace River region until after the Second World War.[37]

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[35] Threshing machines were used on the Grande Prairie before 1912, and had been sent by steamer as far as Fort St. John. Gudlaugson, *Three Times a Pioneer*, 21 and 28

The continued settlement process, the slow expansion of farms, and the below average utilisation of expensive mechanised equipment had an impact upon debt loads as well.[38] In comparison to the southern prairies, debt never became as severe a problem in the Peace River region. Small debts to each other for stock or equipment certainly existed for all farmers, but few were concerned about losing the farm to the banks.[39] For example, during the post-World War One recession, the southern prairie experienced a major farm debt crisis. The high price commanded by Canadian wheat and the increased profitability of agriculture had led many western Canadian farmers to expand their farm operations through borrowing. The decline in the price of wheat in 1920 made servicing these debts impossible for many farmers.[40] The timing of settlement, the

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Record, August 9, 1918. Twelve threshing crews operated in the Pouce Coupé region in 1926. *Sun*, September 10, 1927.

[36] The fee varied substantially from year to year. In 1921, Clyde Campbell reported $0.12/bushel for oats. During the Depression fees could be $0.06-$0.09/bushel. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 124. *Record*, August 20, 1937.

[37] The first combines entered into the North Peace in 1928. *Record*, August 17, 1928.

[38] W.A. Mackintosh pointed out that purchasing new land for expansion accounted for the largest portion of prairie farm debt in the 1930s. Machinery purchases were the next largest category. Mackintosh, *Economic Problems of the Prairie Provinces*, 260.

[39] Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 148.

[40] Thompson, *The Harvests of War*, 59-66. Jones, *Empire of Dust*, 158-63. David Jones, "An Exceedingly Risky and Unremunerative Partnership: Farmers and the Financial Interests Amid the Collapse of Southern Alberta," in *Building Beyond the*

inability of a farmer to mortgage the farm prior to obtaining patent, and the refusal of implement companies to sell on credit in such a newly settled district, meant Peace River farmers never took on the debt loads of their southern counterparts during the first world war.[41]

That is not to say a problem did not exist. Some settlers had entered the Peace during World War One not only because the stories of good land enticed them, but also because the purchase price for raw lands was low. Moreover, as settlement expanded in the Peace in 1918 and 1919, a few farmers expanded their holdings by purchasing a neighbour's land. The post-war recession and price collapse devastated these farmers, and many simply abandoned their holdings.[42] W.D. Albright also believed that the policies of the Soldier Settlement Board contributed to a modest post-war recession debt crisis. The SSB provided all men who served with the allies in a theatre of war or outside their country of enlistment with assistance settling in the Peace Country.[43] Assistance generally meant financial help in the form of low interest loans. Settling in a new region, however, was time consuming and expensive. It often took years for a new farm to enter a productive stage. Despite the pleas of Albright and the Grande Prairie UFA, the government had provided soldier settlers with easy access to $2000 of credit. As a result, many of these settlers failed under the pressure of the debt load as they tried to improve their farms to a commercial stage.[44]

The census reported on farm debt for the first time in 1931. Figure 6-18 suggests that proportionately fewer farmers in the Peace River country had taken mortgages than

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Homestead, 207-28.

[41] The *Record*, March 10, 1916 editorial called International Harvester's refusal to offer credit a blessing. Professor McGibbon's provincial investigation on banking found few complaints about banks and credit in the Peace River country. *Record*, August 10, 1922.

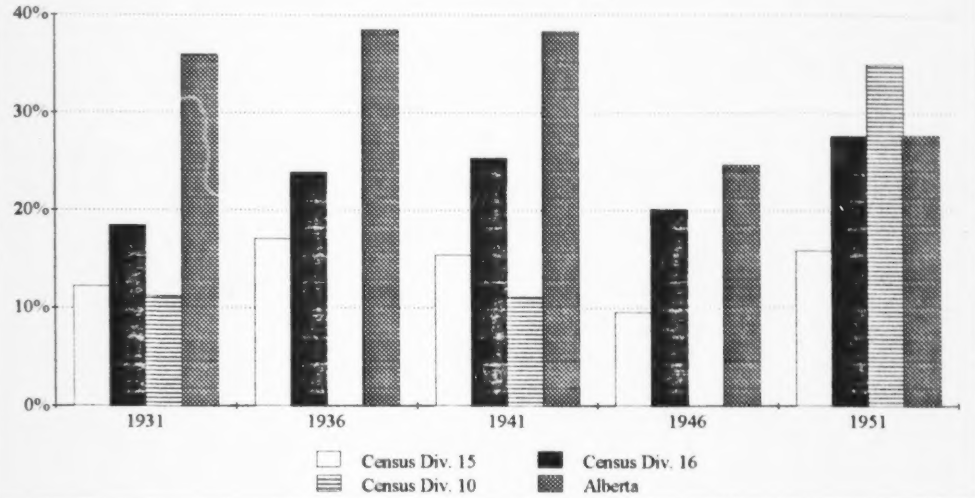
[42] GMA, M3864, Interview with Hugh Allen by Una MacLean, March 19, 1961.

[43] Privy Council Order No. 123, January 17, 1919.

[44] Albright to Editor, *Journal* September 1, 1932.

Figure 6-18

Percentage of Farms with a Mortgage



Data for Census Division 10 is not available for 1936 or 1946

in Alberta as a whole. Because an intra-regional breakdown is not available, the illustration is deceiving. The time of settlement is a critical factor in assessing mortgage debt. Note the difference between Census Division 16 (the location of most pre-1925 settlement) and Census Division 15 and B.C. Census Division 10. Some farmers in the Peace country had certainly avoided debt, and the homesteading wave between 1926 and 1931 brought many other debt free farmers to the region. The majority of farmers in the older settled districts, however, had expanded their holdings, purchased farm implements and automobiles, and improved their houses primarily through borrowing.[45] These farmers carried debt loads approaching those of southern Alberta farmers. As prices collapsed in the Depression, indications of a credit problem emerged. Albright chastised those unwilling or unable to pay their debts, and local UFA groups called for a moratorium of debt repayment.[46] Especially critical were those cases where farmers had expanded their farm holdings by purchasing a neighbour's property or school lands after 1928. Several farmers defaulted on these transactions.[47]

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[45] *Record*, November 15, 1929. The Pioneer Problems Committee survey found that 91 of the 202 farms visited in the older settled districts had mortgage debt. This compared with 2 of the 75 farms on the fringe of settlement. The committee also found that 79% of the farms in the older districts had debt obligations compared with 50% in the fringe region. They found few cases, however, where the debt to capital ratio exceeded 15%. Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 86 and 109.

Few farmers could pay off their mortgages during the Depression, and thus the proportion of farms with a mortgage slowly increased as the homesteaders of 1927 to 1931 obtained patent for their land and borrowed against the value of their farms. Only in Census Division 15 did the level of mortgage debt decrease prior to World War 2 and this may be attributed to farm abandonment.[48] During the war, farmers took the opportunity to pay down loans and reduce their mortgage obligations. Following the war, the district experienced increased prosperity and inflated land values.[49] Many farmers who had settled in the Peace during the early stages of the Depression, especially in the Peace River Block in B.C., expanded their operations. This activity resulted in a massive increase in mortgage debt.

Although a dominant feature in the Peace River economy, northern agriculture never achieved the financial success of its southern counterparts prior to 1950. The combined value of land, buildings, machinery, and livestock never reached the Alberta average in the period of study (Figure 6-19). This is partly explained by the smaller size of farms in the Peace River country, but as Figure 6-20 demonstrates, farm value per acre also lagged behind the Alberta provincial average. The relative wealth of a Peace

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[46] *Record*, October 24, 1930, October 31, 1930, and October 21, 1932.

[47] PAA, County of Grande Prairie, Acc. 70.209, "Minutes of Bear Lake, M.D. No. 740, August 13, 1932. *Record*, May 21, 1937.

[48] *Census of the Prairie Provinces*, 1936, Table 112, 1174. The Census reported 551 farms abandoned in Division 15, and 2606 as the total number of farms. Since the Census gave information on 2606 farmers in the district, it is not clear if the abandoned farms were included in the totals. The scale of abandonment, however, would influence the information of per-farm debt loads.

[49] CNR Department of Colonisation, "Annual Report on the Northern Alberta Railways Territory," 1944. *Ibid.*, 1946. These reports can be found in both PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 399 and NAC, RG 30, vol. 5602.

Figure 6-19

Value per Farm

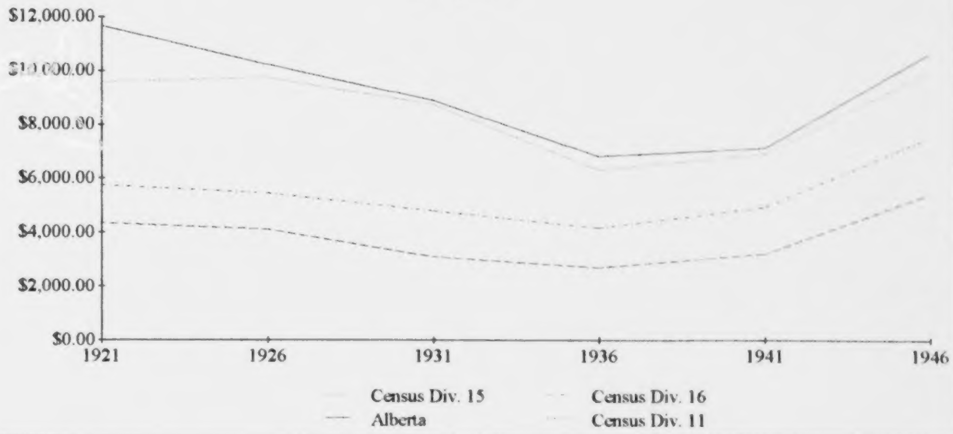
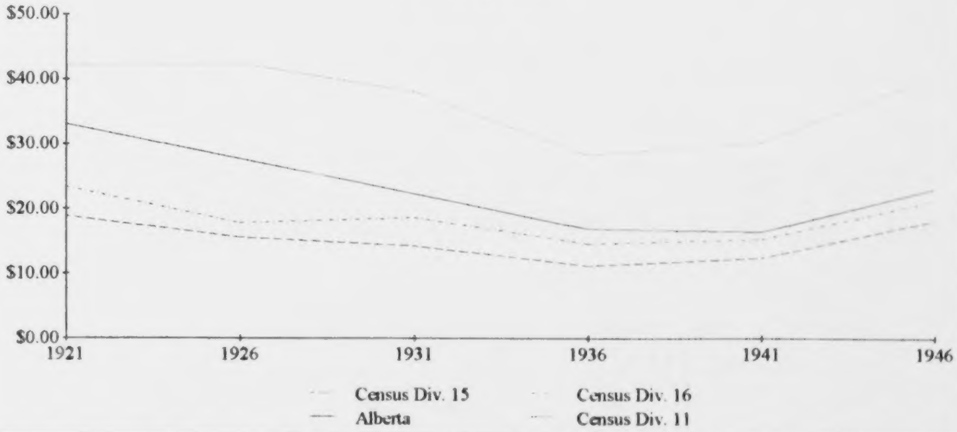


Figure 6-20

Farm Value per Acre



River farmer compares even less favourably with the mixed farms in the Edmonton district or Census Division 11. This information does not mean that Peace River farmers did not succeed in achieving a commercial agrarian economy nor that they did not attempt to achieve this system. Figure 6-21 illustrates the significant intra-regional variation in the 1941 farm values for the Peace River country. Although the average farm value in all three Census Divisions fell well below the Alberta average, in the older settled districts around Berwyn, Fairview, Grande Prairie, Wembley, and Falher farm values

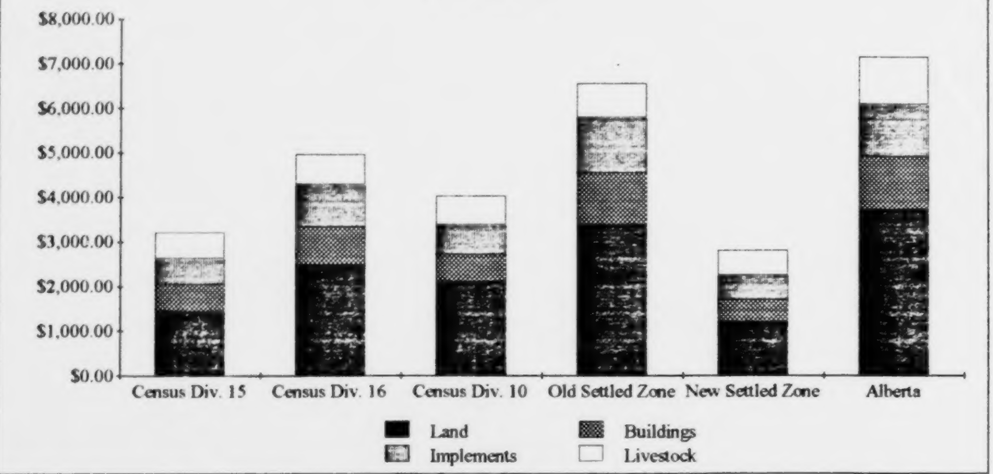


Figure 6-21

Value/Farm in 1941

Old Settled Zone is, M.D. 739, 740, 829, 857, 858, and I.D. 796. New Zone is I.D. 738, 830, 859, 888, 889, and 978

compared favourably with other areas of Alberta. The agricultural pattern in the Peace River country, consequently, must be understood to contain substantial diversity. The condition of the land prior to settlement, the period of settlement, the quality of the soil, crop selection, and climate all affected farm viability and economic success. It is clear, however, that farmers on the fringes of the Peace, those areas settled after 1925, faced severe financial hardships. They would rely upon other aspects of the economy to survive.

Many farmers sought employment off-farm. Establishing a homestead was expensive, and since the farm would not provide a viable income source for a few years following homesteading, an alternative income source was a necessity.[50] Clyde Campbell wrote:

> You MUST remember that until we homesteaders get our land broken and producing, that everything is outlay, outlay, outlay, with nothing coming in from the land. The only man with something to sell is the man who has been here eight or nine years. No one south of the Red Willow

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[50] Lyle Dick, "Estimates of Farm Making Costs in Saskatchewan, 1882-1914," *Prairie Forum* 6 (Fall 1981), 182-202.

(Elmworth) has anything for sale.[51]

The continued pioneer status of some Peace River farms, the lengthy period of adjustment to the environmental conditions, and the continued settlement process on predominantly forested lands, meant off-farm employment remained important throughout the study period. Dawson reported that nearly one-fifth of farmers in the Peace Region in 1930 derived income from non-farm sources.[52] These farmers became the source of seasonal labour in the agricultural and forestry sectors.[53] They also sought economic opportunities in railway and road construction, freighting, trapping, and big game hunting opportunities.[54] The economic cycle and labour needs, however, rarely coincided. During the 1926-29 period of farm prosperity and expansion, the supply of labour could not meet farm demands. During the two periods following the largest settlement waves, severe economic recessions (1920 to 1924 and 1930 to 1935) limited the opportunities for employment, and hence, a labour surplus existed.

The Depression, consequently, emphasised the weakness of the regional economy. A new wave of settlers attempted to scratch out viable homesteads in the forest fringe of the region as agricultural prices and off-farm employment opportunities both collapsed. The situation in many of the fringe settlement zones approached desperation.[55] Dire poverty led to disillusionment. Rather than give up on the region, however, the new settlers sought temporary assistance in overcoming the problems they faced. They recognised that farms in the older settled zones had avoided the desperate conditions and seemed to be surviving the crisis.[56] Relief was necessary, but relief should be used to construct roads and clear brush in order to make their farms profitable.[57]

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[51] Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 171.

[52] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*, 90.

[53] Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 24-7, 83.

[54] NAC, Bennett Papers, 380303-17, "Memorandum on the Peace River Block." PABC, Earl Pollon Collection, Add.MSS 769, Seth Richardson to E. Forfar (B.C. Police), August 13, 1925. Many settlers on the fringes were actually trappers who farmed part time. Kitto, *The Peace River District*, 1919, 17, R.M. Patterson, *Far Pastures*, 7, Cecilia Goodenough, "Homesteading in North-West Canada," 195, and B.K. Acton, *A Short Appraisal of Agriculture at Fort Vermilion*, 1942.

[55] The situation even came to the attention of R.B. Bennett. NAC, R.B. Bennett Papers, 491592, T.W. Hargreaves to Bennett, August 11, 1930. *Ibid.*, 380303-17, "Memorandum on the Peace River Block, August 1-6, 1932." *Bulletin*, January 9, 1931.

While farmers continued to express a faith in the region and remained optimistic about the future economy, they were not the only residents in the Peace River region. Towns developed in the region simultaneously with the farm community. During the early settlement period, each school district seemed to have a post office and a small general merchant store. Few of these commercial centres could be called towns, but in select locations thriving urban communities did begin to develop. Since settlement islands developed on the open lands throughout the Peace River region, Grande Prairie, Lake Saskatoon, Bear Lake, Waterhole, Spirit River and Rolla each existed to serve an alternative island community. Two other centres, Grouard and Peace River, had developed as important transshipment points between the river steamers and the wagon freighting businesses. All these centres had attracted a significant mercantile presence prior to World War 1.

Like most prairie towns, the urban communities in the Peace River region were relatively similar. Rather than agricultural villages or centres of industry or manufacturing, the towns in the Peace Country existed as service centres for the farm population.[58] Nor did the towns become centres of accumulation for industrial, agricultural, or transient unskilled labourers. Instead, the towns offered services such as community centres, churches, schools, and hospitals to the rural community. They also contained trading stores (remnants of the old fur trade economy), a post office, a bank, grocery stores, general goods stores, hardware, building supplies and lumber, livery and harness shops, stables, blacksmiths, pool halls, barber shops, restaurants, and hotels. The two largest centres, Grande Prairie and Peace River, also contained the professional offices of doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, insurance companies, and lands officials, and specialty shops like a jewellery store, watchmaker, laundry, and millinery.[59] As agricultural service centres, the economic fortunes of the towns fluctuated with the agricultural economy. Towns grew rapidly in boom times, and shrank appreciably in recessions.

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[56] NAC, Bennett Papers, 380133-4, Grande Prairie Board of Trade to Bennett, January 17, 1931.

[57] For some examples from a variety of districts see: PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 65, Grande Prairie Board of Trade to Allen, September 26, 1930. *Ibid.*, file 67, A. Dumont (Tangent) to Allen, October 1, 1930. *Ibid.*, Debolt UFA to Allen, October 17, 1930. *Ibid.*, C.H. Walker (Blueberry Mountain) to Allen, October 27, 1930. *Ibid.*, D. Williamson (Valleyview) to Allen, November 12, 1930.

[58] J.C. Hudson, "The Plains Country Town," in *Great Plains: Environment and Culture*, 106.

As in most of the prairie west, many urban centres preceded railway construction and patiently awaited the arrival of the transportation links which would spur on further development. The railway rarely used the existing townsite, and in most cases, the town relocated following the arrival of the railway. Of the six village locations in the Peace River region prior to the railway, only Grande Prairie and Peace River became the sites of modern communities.[60] On the western edge of the Fairview/Berwyn prairie and in the Peace River Block this "inconvenience" became a major problem. The villages of Lake Saskatoon, Waterhole, and Rolla had substantial populations long before the railway arrived in the district. Several requests for an early selection of the permanent townsites produced no response. Following the arrival of the railway at Wembley in 1924, at Fairview in 1928, and at Dawson Creek in 1931, these three villages reacted quite differently. Lake Saskatoon slowly lost its people to the new town of Wembley,

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[59] Isabel Campbell, *Grande Prairie*, 40-41. *Brick's Hill, Berwyn, and Beyond*, (Berwyn: Berwyn Centennial Committee, 1968), 92-96. M.E. Coutts, *Dawson Creek*, 34. *Herald*, March 25, 1913. *Record*, July 23, 1914, December 21, 1922 and February 12, 1925. *Block News*, December 20, 1930.

[60] Significantly, these two centres were on the ED & BC and Central Canadian Railway lines. The village of Bear Lake for example split with the bulk of the community moving to the townsite at Berwyn and a few residents moving to the Grimshaw stopping place. *Record* January 12, 1922.

Waterhole simply moved to the new townsite, and the people of Rolla stayed and lobbied ineffectively for a rail line.[61]

Grande Prairie in the south, Peace River in the north, and Dawson Creek in the west slowly came to dominate the Peace River mercantile trade. Each town obtained significant advantages over its competitors at a key moment by becoming the "end of the steel." Grande Prairie held this distinction in the south Peace between 1916 and 1923; Peace River in the north Peace from 1916 to 1922; and Dawson Creek in the Peace River Block from 1931 until the end of the study period. The merchants in these communities thereby obtained a commercial advantage and maintained their status through continued lobbying efforts. By 1937, all three centres had obtained recognition as outward-class distribution centres in terms of railway freight rates, and both Peace River and Grande Prairie had well serviced airports to ensure access to that means of transportation.[62] Peace River also had the important linkage between the river system and the railway.

The union of commercial and government administration functions also proved important for Grande Prairie and Peace River. Merchants and professionals became the primary residents of Grande Prairie in its first years, and the first stores built by the Pattersons, the post office, and the Union Bank which arrived in 1911 all serviced the growing farm community.[63] Grande Prairie and Peace River, however, also offered administrative resources such as the Dominion Government Lands offices, police service, and court facilities. By 1920, Grande Prairie claimed 5 banks, 3 elevators, 3 lumber companies, 4 general wholesalers, a planing mill, a theatre, a Dominion Lands office, the SSB, the district court, the public health unit, the district office of the Alberta

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[61] *Record* October 21, 1926, November 4, 1926, June 15, 1928, October 5, 1928, and November 22, 1929. *Block News* June 10, 1930 and September 30, 1930.

[62] Grande Prairie lobbied for preferential freight rate status as early as 1930. PAA, Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 359, T.W. Lawlor to A. Chard, August 20, 1930. All three centres obtained preferential rates simultaneously. *Record*, November 12, 1937. Dawson Creek struggled to get access to air transportation with only limited success. *Block News*, October 24, 1940.

[63] Campbell, *Grande Prairie*, 8 and 20-2.

Department of Agriculture, 6 more government agencies, and numerous smaller commercial enterprises.[64] Peace River contained a similar agglomeration of government and commercial establishments.[65]

What limited manufacturing existed in the region's towns was concentrated upon refining agricultural products for the local market. Flour mills, abattoirs, and creameries thus became the three most important manufacturing facilities.[66] The importance of flour mills were recognised as early as 1913. The *Grande Prairie Herald* suggested that settlers purchase flour from the local mill at Lake Saskatoon. The mill provided a market for local wheat and, the editor noted, "the more money we can keep in circulation in this country the better will the prosperity be for the future."[67] Flour mills operated periodically in Grande Prairie, Peace River, Fort St. John and Dawson Creek as local businessmen attempted to secure increased benefits from agricultural production.[68]

The importance of manufacturing for the local communities led to intense competition between towns. Because of their technical requirements and expense, more significant competition occurred for creameries. Both Berwyn and Peace River, for example, sought the Edmonton City Dairies facilities in 1922 and conducted an intensive lobbying campaign.[69] Berwyn eventually won the contest, but the creamery closed during the wheat boom of the late 1920s. During the Depression both farmers and merchants recognised dairy operations as an important economic diversification scheme. Although the dairies at High Prairie and Valhalla still operated under capacity and the facilities still existed at Berwyn, the merchants in Peace River and Dawson Creek campaigned for their own projects and eventually built creameries at their towns.[70]

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[64] Campbell, *Grande Prairie*, 141.

[65] *Record*, August 21, 1931. Interestingly, government offices were never as important a factor in Dawson Creek. The B.C. government had located most of its offices in Pouce Coupé prior to the extension of the NAR. Since Pouce Coupé obtained railway connections, the offices remained at this community for many years.

[66] Campbell, *Grande Prairie*, 47-8. *Record*, April 27, 1922.

[67] *Herald*, December 30, 1913.

[68] *Record*, March 26, 1920, July 16, 1920, January 12, 1921, November 6, 1931, June 10, 1932, and December 13, 1935. *Block News*, November 10, 1931 and October 12, 1934.

[69] *Record* March 16, 1922, May 11, 1922, May 25, 1922, and June 1, 1922.

Butcher shops were common in most towns, but they mainly served the local urban market. Most farmers prepared their own beef or pork for domestic consumption and shipped live animals to the stock yards in Edmonton for processing. Expansion of this industry occurred only in the rare circumstance when a butcher could access a larger market. Thus, after obtaining access to the Yellowknife market in 1937, H.E. Jerry built a large stock yard, processing plant and refrigeration centre at Peace River.[71] These opportunities, however, were rare and meat processing remained a small scale operation in the Peace River region.

Few urban residents were satisfied with serving only the rural hinterland. While both farmers and urban merchants speculated in land, several other notable speculative adventures existed in the Peace River region. The forest industry offered a potential economic opportunity for Peace River's urban based speculators and merchants. Several economic studies of the Peace River region revealed the plausibility of lumber and pulp wood development.[72] Despite these promising surveys, the forest industry in the Peace River region consisted of small scale saw and planing mills utilising farmers as a labour source. The activity of the Grand Trunk Pacific contractors Foley, Welsh and Stewart caused some problems. This firm held most of the good timber reserves surrounding the

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[70] *Record*, January 23, 1931, and March 27, 1931. *Block News*, March 17, 1931.

[71] *Record*, August 20, 1937 and May 27, 1938.

[72] *Canada's Fertile Northland*, 47, 55, 75. PABC, Pattullo Papers, Add.MSS 3, Box 17, file 4, Hayword Kinghorn, "Report on Timber Reconnaissance of the Peace River Country, 1923." PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 245, file 2, "PGE Survey of Resources, November 6, 1931." *Record*, January 14, 1916 and December 29, 1920. Most of the commercial timber existed beyond the fringes of the settlement region. Zaslow suggested that only 10% of the timber in the Peace River region was useable. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie Basin," 307-319.

Grande Prairie. Although rumours of a pulp mill circulated the district, they made few moves to develop this resource.[73] Forestry, consequently, remained an unrealised resource for the regional community.

Petroleum activity was very different. Exploration work dominated the speculative business enterprises in the early settlement period. The possibility of oil production from the Athabasca and Peace River country had been debated for years. The 1888 Senate Committee had noted northern oil potential in its report, and Frank Oliver's newspaper The Edmonton *Bulletin* published several articles on the oil potential in the Mackenzie Basin.[74] The possibility of oil development was recounted by several witnesses at the 1906-7 Senate Committee hearings, and one of the Grande Prairie's prominent early citizens, Harry Clifford, came to the region to investigate the oil potential.[75] By 1912, Walter Moberly had suggested that the future of the Peace Country lay in oil production and refining.[76] Wildcatting occurred throughout Alberta during this period, and activity soon spread to the Peace River region. The British coal magnate D.A. Thomas, better known as Lord Rhondda, and J.D. McArthur, the promoter and owner of the Edmonton Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway, began drilling in the area in 1915.[77] Several claims of oil discoveries by McArthur's Peace River Oil

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[73] *Herald*, August 21, 1917, January 9, 1923, February 10, 1923 and May 8, 1927. *Record*, January 4, 1923.

[74] Report of the Senate Committee, 1888 (especially the map of the Mackenzie Basin). *Bulletin*, October 20, 1888, April 27, 1889, and May 25, 1889. Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 33.

[75] *Canada's Fertile Northland*, 77,99, and 106. Campbell, *Grande Prairie*, 3-5.

[76] PABC, GR 818, file 1:45, Proposal of Walter Moberly for Peace River oil development, August 6, 1912.

[77] McArthur's company explored the Peace River valley near the town of Peace River, while Rhondda confined his interest to the area north of Fort Vermilion. *Record*, October 8, 1915, October 29, 1915, November 5, 1915, and March 3, 1916. Harris, *Story of the Peace*, 17-8.

Company would be made during the following years.[78] Pierre Gauvreau recalled that the district's prosperity depended upon the millions of dollars spent by the wildcatters in their search.[79]

Speculation and oil fever hit the community of Peace River in 1918. A local firm, the Tar Island Oil and Gas Company, began drilling operations that year, and local boosters claimed that ten firms would be active in the oil field. Despite continuous denials from McArthur's company, boosters and merchants trumpeted unsubstantiated claims of oil discoveries.[80] Word that Imperial Oil and San Joaquin Oil of California had expressed an interest in the field intensified the local enthusiasm, and one wildcat operation informed the local board of trade that it would drill fifteen wells in 1919.[81] The intensity of the 1918 speculation even frightened some boosters. Chas. Frederick issued a stern warning about wild speculation in search of "easy money," and he asked the Alberta government to maintain tight regulations on oil development.[82]

Speculation continued unabated into the 1920s. Following the discovery of oil at Fort Norman in the Mackenzie valley, the oil field speculation intensified briefly in the Peace River area. At its peak in the winter of 1919-1920, seven companies actually participated in the Peace River oil bonanza. The next year, oil field mania spread to the south Peace following rumours that Imperial Oil would drill in the Pouce Coupé district. A staking rush ensued as local merchants and farmers purchased 789 leases valued at

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[78] *Record*, August 11, 1916, October 12, 1917, June 21, 1918

[79] PAA, Gauvreau Papers, Acc. 66.135, J13, "Draft Manuscript on History of Peace River," 1932.

[80] *Record*, April 12, 1918, May 17, 1918, June 21, 1918.

[81] *Record*, July 5, 1918, August 30, 1918, September 13, 1918, September 24, 1918, March 28, 1919, December 29, 1920.

[82] *Record*, June 28, 1918 and September 24, 1918.

$140,000.[83] Other wildcat drilling operations occurred near Hudson's Hope in 1922.[84] Each company drilled its wells, found small flows of heavy oil, and then discovered a gusher of salt water and natural gas at lower levels.[85] The companies spent more money stopping the flow of water than drilling for oil. As activity declined, the value of oil leases held by local investors and speculators declined. They remained positive about the oil field, nevertheless, and the local board of trade continued to promote oil development and distribute "authentic information" to interested parties. They concluded "[t]hat the oil field is sufficiently extensive to warrant the investment of a large amount of capital to secure production."[86] McArthur's corporate empire crumbled in 1920, however, and other companies purportedly with the backing of American and eastern Canadian financial interests, took over the drilling sites and continued operations with less enthusiasm. "It is a significant fact," noted Chas. Frederick, "that other companies which have entered the field have carried on with apparently unlimited capital ... although it is difficult to say whether their drill has gone fifty feet further to date than it was a year ago."[87]

Oil field mania soon died in Peace River. Reports of drilling operations in the valley surfaced occasionally in the local press into the 1930s, and the local community continued to promote activity, even demand activity, through World War Two.[88] Small scale projects kept the dream of oil wealth alive in the community. One poorly planned effort to build a refinery at Peace River occurred in 1934. The promoter hoped to refine oil from Wainwright for local consumption and to spur on local drilling, but the plant was dismantled in the winter of 1936.[89] One of the wells drilled in the 1920s, the Victory well near the bridge in the town of Peace River, hit a large supply of natural gas. Despite efforts to improve the well and find oil, the gas continued to flow. The well became a constant reminder of the oil field, until the new Peace River flour mill tapped it as a source of energy in 1937.[90] Gas continued to escape from the Bonanza well as a similar beacon for wildcat operators.[91] Finally in 1936, a Calgary investor began acquiring leases on 50,000 acres in the area. Other companies joined the Batchellor syndicate, and one company, Guardian Oil, drew the interest of local speculators as a miniature oil rush developed.[92] Guardian conducted the only drilling operation in the area but soon ran into financial difficulties. By June 1939, two Pennsylvania-based wildcatters had acquired the leases in the area, and took control of Guardian Oil's drilling operations.[93] A gas well at Bonanza was finally brought into production in the fall of 1943.[94]

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[83] Interior, *Annual Report, 1922*, Part I, 10. M.E. Coutts, *Dawson Creek Past and Present*, (Dawson Creek Historical Society, 1958), 109. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 115, 118, 125-8.

[84] Earl Pollon and Shirley Matheson, *This Was Our Valley*. *Record*, May 4, 1922.

[85] At Peace River, eight holes had hit the water horizon and water and gas flowed freely from the abandoned sites until after the Second World War. The well at Bonanza hit a gas flow of 10,500,000 cubic feet per day before hitting the water horizon. Interior, *Annual Report, 1923*, Part I, 79. *Record*, February 13, 1920 and March 26, 1920. David Breen, *Alberta's Petroleum Industry and the Conservation Board*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993), 621-2.

[86] *Record*, March 2, 1922.

[87] *Record*, May 10, 1923 and March 13, 1924.

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[88] *Record*, April 10, 1924, May 15, 1924, May 21, 1925, June 4, 1925, March 18, 1926, October 4, 1929, January 31, 1930, October 30, 1931, July 25, 1941, June 5, 1942, and March 19, 1943.

[89] *Record*, November 24, 1933 and February 21, 1936.

[90] *Record*, October 1, 1937.

[91] *Block News*, October 30, 1936.

[92] *Record*, March 13, 1936. *Block News*, June 5, 1936, May 28, 1937, August 25, 1938, and October 6, 1938. *Nor'West Miner*, May 1938. The local investment group based in Grande Prairie took control of Guardian Oil at an estimated cost of $40,000.

[93] *Block News*, February 23, 1939, March 23, 1939, and June 22, 1939. *Nor'West Miner*, December 1938 and June 1939.

[94] *Block News*, August 12, 1943 and October 14, 1943.

The British Columbia sections of the Peace River country also demonstrated potential. The exploration in B.C., however, was limited by the B.C. government's 1919 decision to reserve all coal, oil, and gas on all land in the region outside of the Dominion controlled Peace River Block. The provincial government hoped to use the land and resources in the north as a lure for investors in its tenuous Pacific Great Eastern Railway. The reserve was extended to the Block in October 1930 following its transfer to provincial jurisdiction.[95] Ten potential petroleum structures had been identified in the B.C. region, nevertheless, and local speculators made several pleas for a lifting of the reserves to no avail.[96] The gas and oil prospects in the Block, however, led the provincial government to speculate in oil development during the Second World War. They drilled a test well west of the Pine River valley at Commotion Creek.[97] As expenses mounted, the B.C. government attempted to have the federal government assume responsibility for this property as a war project. The new B.C. Premier, John Hart, rejected the Dominion suggestion that development be turned over to private corporations, and, following the failure of this last ditch effort to "prove" the oil field in the Peace River Block, they dismantled the drilling operation.[98]

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[95] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 176, file 15. For information on the PGE see Supra, Chapter 7 and Bruce Ramsay, *The PGE: Railway to the North*.

[96] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 245, file 2, PGE Survey of Resources, November 6, 1931. *Ibid.*, Box 144, file 3, J.A. Campbell to Pattullo, January 13, 1937. *Ibid.*, Campbell to Pattullo June 11, 1937. *Ibid.*, Pattullo to Campbell, June 15, 1937. *Ibid.*, Box 176, file 15, Hudson Hope Board of Trade to John Hart, January 6, 1944. *Ibid.*, Hart to Hudson Hope Board of Trade, January 20, 1944. The local newspaper declared the government's position "a negation of local rights." *Block News*, September 18, 1936 and February 3, 1938.

[97] *Block News*, May 2, 1940, May 23, 1940, July 25, 1940, and November 28, 1940. PABC, Pattullo Papers, Add.MSS 3, Box 67, file 1, T.B. Williams to J.F. Walker (Deputy Minister of Mines), December 1, 1941.

[98] NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 313, 264768-71, Pattullo to King, July 14, 1941. PABC, Pattullo Papers, Add.MSS 3, Box 70, file 5, Clerk of the Privy Council to Pattullo, August 7, 1941. PABC, Department of Mines, GR 1095, file 10, "Notes on Conference between the Dominion and B.C. over B.C. offer of oil rights in Peace River

Next to oil, the potential for coal mining was the most important element of the speculative economy. Small coal seams existed throughout the Peace River basin, and small local companies formed periodically to exploit this resource for local consumption. Reports of coal finds near the town of Peace River, for example, were reported in 1914, 1924, and 1933. On each occasion, a group of local speculators attempted to mine this information for their advantage but soon gave up the adventure.[99] These local coal finds, like many in Alberta, consisted of small quantities of low quality lignite coal. As such these coal seams offered limited potential for profitable mining.

Large high quality coal seams, however, existed in the foothills along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains. B.C. mineralogist, C.F. Galloway discovered several seams of a "high carbon bituminous coal ... being altogether of an exceptional quality for western America" in the Hudson Hope region, and this valuable find captured the attention of Lord Rhondda during World War One.[100] At least three separate seams existed in the B.C. foothills, and local promoters such as the Gething Brothers soon obtained mining leases on all of the prospective sites. Tests conducted in the 1920s found the coal to be a high quality semi-bituminous coal suitable for railway operations and rumours that the Gething mine would begin commercial production circulated frequently, but a lack of adequate transportation facilities to Hudson Hope and the increased costs of production this entailed prevented any mine from beginning production.[101]

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for the duration of the War," May 27, 1942. *Block News*, April 9, 1942, June 4, 1942, and September 17, 1942.

[99] *Record*, August 15, 1914, January 12, 1917, February 21, 1924, December 18, 1924, July 16, 1925, October 27, 1933, and February 2, 1934.

[100] PABC, Department of Mines, GR 1097, file 5, Report of C.F. Galloway, 1912. Canada, Department of the Interior, *Annual Reports*, 1916-17, 19. *Record*, March 3, 1916.

[101] PABC, I/GB/M11, R.M. Macauley, "Report on the Coal Resources, Peace River District, Brtish Columbia," September 1923. *Record*, May 31, 1923. PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 13b, Wesley Gething to CPR, November 30, 1925. *Ibid.*, CPR to Gething, December 30, 1925. *Ibid.*, Memorandum on Hudson's Hope Coal, November 20, 1939. NAC, RG 30, v. 7333, "Peace River Coast Outlet Synopsis 1945," 81-4.

Coal mining had to await special circumstances before it could become viable. The U.S. military activity along the Alaska Highway project, the increased demand for coal during World War Two, the shortage of rail cars along the NAR system, and a washout along the CNR line to Cadomin renewed interest in Peace River coal production. The Hasler Creek Coal Company Limited had obtained the leases on coal production west of the Pine River on the south side of the Peace. They offered to sell coal to the NAR at Dawson Creek in 1944.[102] Tests comparing Hasler Creek coal with the NAR's Cadomin coal revealed a 23% increase in efficiency. Hasler Creek coal, however, had to be hauled by truck from the mine to Dawson Creek and sold for $14.50 per ton, 50% more than Cadomin coal at the same location. Peace River Coal Mines (Gething Brothers) meanwhile offered to sell coal from Hudson's Hope at $14.50 per ton delivered at Peace River and sold coal to the American army at $12 per ton delivered at Taylor's Flats. After a lengthy negotiation, the NAR paid $10 per ton for the Hasler Creek coal.[103] The success of the adventure for the Peace River coal industry proved fleeting. The roads from Hasler Creek to Dawson Creek disintegrated during the spring break up and Hasler Creek could not guarantee delivery. The NAR shifted its coal purchasing back to the Cadomin mines.[104]

Despite the efforts of the Peace River boosters, the regional economy -- agrarian, merchant and speculative -- remained at a pioneer level through World War Two. Although the economy demonstrated weakness overall, the landscape offered the residents a potential source of wealth in wheat, livestock, oil, coal, and timber. The residents had to wait, however. The economy had not yet fulfilled the promise of the image. Some people certainly gave up on the region in disillusion and despair. For those who remained, a quest to fulfill the image dominated their lives. They recognised the need to adapt to the landscape and to exploit its wealth, but they came to believe that the Dominion and Provincial governments had failed to comprehend it. Transportation concerns soon dominated their relationship with the metropolitan communities. Improved transportation, they firmly believed, would fulfill their dreams.

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[102] PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 13a., Gordon Wilson to J.M. MacArthur, January 25, 1944.

[103] PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 13a., "Comparative Test: Hasler Creek and Cadomin Coal," March 1944. *Ibid.*, J.M. MacArthur to W.A. Mather, March 30, 1944. *Ibid.*, Lloyd Gething to MacArthur, April 11, 1944. *Ibid.*, M.S. Morrell to MacArthur, May 29, 1944. *Ibid.*, Gordon Wilson to MacArthur, May 17, 1944. *Ibid.*, Gordon Wilson to MacArthur, June 22, 1944. NAC, RG30, V. 13219, file 9735-1, N.B. Walton to R.C. Vaughn, June 2, 1944. *Ibid.*, Walton to Vaughn, July 21, 1944.

[104] PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 14b., A.B. Elliot (NAR Agent, Dawson Creek) to J.E. Deakin, March 25, 1945 and April 11, 1945.

Chapter 7

Railways and Highways to the Peace: Environmental and Metropolitan Perspectives

Unjigah had a profound impact upon transportation in the Peace River region. The Peace River was a highway from north to west. It connected the Beaver and Cree trappers with northern fur traders, and lured Alexander Mackenzie on his Pacific voyage. Together with the Cree trails to Jasper and the Athabasca country, it made the Peace River region a nodal transportation centre connecting north, south, and west. Early exploration proved the merits of this nodal system. Horetzky and Macoun entered from the region from the south, Ogilvie from the north, and Selwyn and Dawson from the west. Settlement, however, shattered the system. Railways and roads entered from the south, and Unjigah became a barrier to overcome rather than an avenue of accessibility. A system for transporting produce from the region existed, but something was missing. Peace River settlers spent the next generation attempting to restore the old nodal system.

Trunk roads were the first concern of Peace River residents. The earliest settlers to the Peace River region had arrived from the south along trails, and the earliest demands from the residents were for an improvement of these routes. The north and south side of the Peace were accessed by separate routes, and by 1910, the Alberta government had begun survey work on both trails.[1] One followed the Athabasca Trail north from Edmonton then used river steamers along the Lesser Slave Lake system to Grouard, and hence north to Peace River Crossing. The other went north from Edson on the CNR mainline to Sturgeon Lake and then west to Grande Prairie. These two routes formed the nucleus of two competing highway visions: the Peace River to

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[1] PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3518, Petition from Grande Prairie for road Grande Prairie to Lac Ste. Anne via Sturgeon Lake, July 24, 1906. *Ibid.*, C.J. MacPhee (Entwistle) to Minister of Public Works, January 20, 1910. *Ibid.*, Deputy Minister to Minister, July 2, 1910. GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 8, A. McQuarrie, "Now it Can be Told: the Edson Trail." Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 143. J.G. Macgregor, *Trails to the Peace River Country*, (Grande Prairie Museum, 1977).

Edmonton highway, and the Whitecourt cut-off.

The arrival of a railway in the Peace River region in 1914 reduced the reliance of the district on trails and roads, but the demands for improvements of these projects did not disappear. When completed the railway played only a minor role in intra-regional traffic. The train travelled only twice weekly thus making day trips impossible. A trip from Berwyn to Grande Prairie required the passenger to leave Berwyn on the south bound train, debark at McLennan where the train met the south bound train from Grande Prairie, wait three days at McLennan for the north bound trains to arrive, and then travel to Grande Prairie. Hence roads and trails were the main avenue for intra-regional traffic.

Roads also held a certain mythical importance for the settlers in the Peace River region. Although less than useful as a mode of transportation for commodities prior to the Second World War, roads were a symbol of progress and modernity. Thus demands for a system of roads connecting the disparate districts of the Peace River region with Edmonton continued.[2] By 1924, a single road wound through the Peace River country connecting most of the settled districts (Map 22, "Transportation Routes, 1924). It began as a trail at High Prairie in the southeast corner and proceeded north to Peace River. At this point it crossed the Peace River valley and became a graded earthen road west to Waterhole and Dunvegan. At Dunvegan, the graded road crossed back to the south side of the river by ferry and moved south to Spirit River. The route from Spirit River to Grande Prairie became a trail once again through the Saddle Hills. From Sexsmith to Grande Prairie, and then westward once again towards Beaverlodge a graded road existed. A few small feeder roads and trails from Beaverlodge to Pouce Coupé and Spirit River to Rolla existed in conjunction with this system. It remained the main route in the countryside throughout the period of study.

Connecting this system with Edmonton became the subject of a lengthy campaign beginning in 1925. Each rumour that a road would be constructed, and each subsequent delay, produced anxiety amongst the region's boosters.[3] When Alberta finally began work on the route in 1926, it became clear that the Alberta government intended to upgrade the road to Athabasca, and then continue this road along the south side of Lesser Slave Lake to the Peace River country.[4] Grande Prairie lobbied for its route via Whitecourt, and eventually sensing the futility of this project, demanded a road from High Prairie to Grande Prairie via Sturgeon Lake.[5] Construction of the Sturgeon Lake road began in 1930, and by 1932 an unimproved earthen road existed along this route.[6]

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[2] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 294A, A. Peart (High Prairie) to Greenfield, September 15, 1921. *Record*, August 25, 1921, May 4, 1922, and August 3, 1922.

The condition of the road became the most pressing concern for the region. Complaints about the washouts, muskegs, and mudholes existed from the outset.[7] One visitor recalled that the road after Athabasca slowly disintegrated into two ruts through the forest. Even after a lengthy dry spell, Ralph Sketch noted, mud appeared in many areas. In areas where the road approached close to the Lake, water covered the road entirely forcing cars on to the railway embankment.[8] Flooding in the summer of 1930 and again in 1935 destroyed the highway around Lesser Slave Lake.[9] Slowly, a desire emerged to gravel the road and make it passable to motor vehicles in all weather.[10] Despite the efforts of Alberta to meet this demand before the Second World War the road remained primarily a poorly graded, rutted, earthen road.[11] The quest for modernity and progress remained unfulfilled.

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[3] *Record*, April 3, 1924, July 9, 1925, September 10, 1925. GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 8, A. McQuarrie, "Money (and other) Matters," 17-18.

[4] PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 60, O.L. McPherson to Allen, May 23, 1927. *Record*, January 21, 1926, February 4, 1926, February 11, 1926, September 9, 1926, November 11, 1926, and March 24, 1927.

[5] PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3522, J.W. Sawyer (M.D. 739) to Alex Ross, February 22, 1926. *Ibid.*, file 3518, J.W. Sawyer to Brownlee, May 23, 1930. *Ibid.*, Brief of the Grande Prairie Board of Trade on Whitecourt Highway, 1930. PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 60, Resolution of the Grande Prairie District UFA, January 12, 1927. *Ibid.*, file 62, Hugh Allen to I.V. Macklin, March 9, 1928. *Ibid.*, Macklin to Allen, March 19, 1928. *Ibid.*, file 65, Grande Prairie Board of Trade to Minister of Public Works, August 20, 1930.

[6] *Record*, December 5, 1930, December 12, 1930, and January 30, 1931. PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3519.

[7] *Record*, June 23, 1927, August 18, 1927, November 3, 1927, July 13, 1928, August 31, 1928, and November 2, 1928.

[8] PAA, Acc. 75.338, Letter of Ralph Sketch, 1930.

While road development and improvement remained a dream for Peace River settlers, a railway was an economic necessity. The lure of the Peace River country captured the interest of numerous railway promoters and fourteen railways were chartered to build through the Peace River region.[12] Two railway deals, both sponsored by Edmonton's business and political elite, stand out in importance. In return for government-guaranteed bonds, the Canadian Northern Railway agreed to extend its Edmonton to Peace River railway from Onoway to Pine Pass or Peace Pass via Grande Prairie, and another railway, the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia (ED & BC), would build a rail line from Edmonton to British Columbia via Lesser Slave Lake and Dunvegan.[13] J.D. McArthur, a prominent contractor for the Grand Trunk Pacific, obtained the ED & BC charter in 1912 and commenced construction.[14] Ironically for the Peace River country, although built along the poorest of possible routes, the ED & BC was the only railway to build into the Peace River region prior to 1957.

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[9] *Record*, June 20, 1930 and May 31, 1935.

[10] *Record*, November 3, 1933, March 30, 1934, July 13, 1934, July 27, 1934. *Block News*, May 17, 1935.

[11] *Record*, July 17, 1936, August 12, 1938.

[12] For a discussion of early railway development see Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North*, 201-16. A list of the railways can be found in J.D. Williams, "The History of the Edmonton Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway," M.A. Thesis, Univ. of Alberta, 1956, 200-201.

[13] Alberta, *Statutes*, 1912, c. 16 and c. 19. Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 210-22, and 266-8.

[14] *Journal*, February 10, 1912.

The ED & BC followed a circuitous route to the Peace River country. The railway contractors, moreover, often chose the route as the railway progressed and, as a result, it did not follow a logical course towards the most settled areas.[15] It proceeded north from Edmonton to the Athabasca River staying east of the Swan Hills. At the junction of the Athabasca and Lesser Slave Rivers, the ED & BC crossed the Athabasca and proceeded westward to Lesser Slave Lake. It followed the southern shore of the Lake to High Prairie before turning northward towards McLennan. From McLennan, the railway proceeded westward across the Smoky River to Spirit River. Two branch lines, one north from McLennan to the town of Peace River and the northern plateaux, the other south from Rycroft to Grande Prairie and then west towards British Columbia were eventually constructed.[16] The two most densely settled agricultural zones, the Grande Prairie and Fairview/Berwyn prairie, ended up at the end of a long railway.

Within two years of the commencement of construction in 1912, the ED & BC project was in financial difficulty. The company had no capitalised stock and relied entirely upon government supported bonds for construction costs. The bond market had collapsed in 1913 and the approach of war only made the situation worse.[17] Settlement in the Peace River region slowed in 1915 reducing the traffic on the completed sections of the railway and reducing the railway's operating income. Despite efforts to convince the Dominion government to provide a subsidy for construction of the railway, J.D. McArthur and the provincial government continued to meet the costs alone. The poor financial underpinning of the line would plague the Peace River rail system throughout its existence.

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[15] The route of the Edmonton Dunvegan and British Columbia as well as several proposed railway routes to the west coast are portrayed in Map 26.

[16] The branch line to Peace River was actually a separate railway, the Central Canada Railway. Alberta *Statutes*, 1913, c. 46.

[17] Williams, "The History of the ED & BC," 28-29, 65-67.

By the end of the war, the ED & BC was on the verge of collapsing.[18] The failure of McArthur to properly ballast the line had led to washouts during the spring and summer, and trains faced a constant threat of derailment. His willingness to use locally obtained ties also meant most had been improperly conditioned prior to placement and rotted quickly. McArthur, moreover, limited maintenance costs in order to maximise operating profits and keep from defaulting on the corporate bonds. The Dominion engineers estimated $950,000 would be necessary to upgrade the lines in 1919, but raised their totals to $2,432,000 the following year.[19]

When service was available, the trip from Grande Prairie to Edmonton averaged 37 hours and trains often travelled little faster than passengers could run.[20] Had service been maintained, these conditions might have been tolerated by the Peace River residents. During the summer of 1919, however, the rail bed between Spirit River and Grande Prairie had become unusable. During the winter, when the rail bed froze, train service continued but a shortage of rolling stock could not move the Peace River harvest out of the region nor supplies into the area. Then in the spring of 1920, the nine mile descent into the Smoky River valley and the steeper but shorter descent into the Peace River valley both washed out.[21]

Following the Dominion government's rejection of McArthur's pleas for a CNR takeover of the Dunvegan line, he defaulted on the bonds.[22] The Alberta government took over operation of the lines and leased them to the CPR in July 1920. The CPR agreed to share any operating profits on the line, and the government of Alberta provided $2,500,000 for upgrading and maintenance. In September, the first train of the summer arrived in Grande Prairie.[23] Grande Prairie boosters were not entirely pleased. They had hoped the collapse of McArthur's railway would result in the extension of the Canadian Northern line through Whitecourt.[24] Any construction along the Whitecourt route would now add to the liabilities upon the government's books. Grande Prairie, therefore, gave up immediate hope of obtaining a direct route to Edmonton.

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[18] Williams, "The History of the ED & BC," 83-94. NAC, Railways, RG 43, vol. 555, file 17773, Alex Ferguson to W.A. Bowden, August 1, 1919.

[19] NAC, Railways, RG 43, vol. 556, file 17773A part 1, Alex Ferguson to Maj. G.A. Bell, April 26, 1926.

[20] *Herald*, August 15, 1916 and September 3, 1918. The train never exceeded 10 miles per hour during Clyde Campbell's journey to Grande Prairie in 1919. R.G. Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 2.

[21] *Record*, November 28, 1919, December 5, 1919, December 12, 1919, January 30, 1920, May 4, 1920, May 21, 1920, June 4, 1920 and June 18, 1920. Williams, "The History of the ED & BC," 100.

The operation of the Dunvegan lines by the CPR was a marked improvement over the original management. The government complained that the CPR failed to provide adequate maintenance, but trains began to run on schedule and fewer breaks in service occurred.[25] But the Peace River region still resented the railway because of the slow pace of branch line construction and the exorbitant freight rates. On the one issue, the government found itself in a confrontation with McArthur and his lenders; on the other issue, the government proved unwilling to make further financial sacrifices.

Freight charges on the ED & BC were a source of contention from the beginning of the railway service to the region. McArthur had obtained the right to set freight rates at double the prairie scale in 1917, and continued to advocate further increases in the tariffs.[26] The rate from Peace River to Edmonton therefore compared with the rate from Edmonton to Lakehead. The two-line haul charge on all products beyond Edmonton[27] aggravated the situation as did the Dominion government desire to ship grain through the Lakehead. Peace River grain rarely reached the port before freeze-up thereby forcing Peace River farmers to pay winter storage at the terminal. Peace River settlers thus fought for better freight rates and shipment of grain through Vancouver during the post-war recession.[28] The district received some relief in 1924 and 1925, but the campaign continued into the 1930s.[29]

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[22] *Record*, September 12, 1919 and July 28, 1920. NAC, Railways, RG 43, vol. 556, file 17773 A part 1, George Foster to McArthur, January 24, 1920. *Ibid.*, McArthur to J.A. Calder, February 10, 1920. *Ibid.*, McArthur to Calder, February 27, 1920. *Ibid.*, Memo Maj. G.A. Bell to Minister, March 2, 1920.

[23] *Journal*, July 21, 1920. *Record*, September 15, 1920.

[24] The Onoway to Peace River branch of the Canadian National reached Whitecourt in 1922, but never reached beyond that point. Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 353-4. Williams, "The History of the ED & BC," 110-1.

[25] Alberta, *Railways: Annual Report*, 1922.

Three separate railway extensions were sought by Peace River settlers. First, settlers in the Fairview/Berwyn prairie demanded that the railway be extended across the valley to the Waterhole district.[30] Second, settlers in the Lake Saskatoon, Beaverlodge, and Valhalla district demanded extension westward from the Grande Prairie branch.[31] And third, settlers in the Pouce Coupé prairie demanded extension of the ED & BC mainline west from Spirit River.[32] The government actually made an effort to construct lines along the Fairview and Grande Prairie routes. It attempted to raise cash through a mortgage on the existing rail line, but faced a problem with the Union Bank. The government controlled the railway, but McArthur and his lender, the Union Bank, refused to turn over the outstanding shares in the ED & BC. The government, consequently, had to obtain permission from the bank to extend the rail lines in the Peace River region.

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[26] His first request in 1915 resulted in an intermediate tariff. *Record*, June 10, 1915. He then obtained higher rates in 1917. Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 67-9. He requested even higher rates in 1920. *Record*, June 4, 1920 and July 16, 1920.

[27] The Edmonton Dunvegan and British Columbia railway ended in Edmonton. Goods travelling from the Peace River region to any point beyond Edmonton, consequently, had to be shipped on the Canadian National or Canadian Pacific railway lines. Goods originating with one company and transferred to another were subjected to higher two-line haul tariffs since both companies had administrative costs.

[28] PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.150.1, "Application to the Board of Railway Commissioners for reduced freight rates on the ED & BC and the CCR by Grande Prairie Board of Trade, May 30, 1923. *Record*, November 30, 1922, December 7, 1922, February 14, 1924. *Province*, February 24, 1925.

[29] *Record*, January 17, 1924, March 5, 1925, and September 3, 1925. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 376, Memo Re: Meeting Greenfield, Shaw, Irvine, Kennedy, Gardner, Spencer and Graham, June 12, 1925. NAC, Bennett Papers, 380299, George Slaney (Peace River Board of Trade) to Bennett, July 13, 1932. PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 400, R.P. Butler (High Prairie Board of Trade) to A. Chard, July 6, 1932. *Record*, March 17, 1933.

[30] *Record*, November 2, 1917, August 29, 1919. January 25, 1921 and March 16, 1921. PAA, Alberta Department of Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.102.1, Charles Stewart to E.W. Beatty, April 22, 1921. *Ibid.*, file 1100.61.1, Norman Soars to V.W. Smith, February 12, 1924.

Despite this obstacle, extensions of the Peace River lines did occur. The Alberta government negotiated a settlement with the Union Bank and mortgaged the railway lines in order to finance the extensions.[33] Brownlee also obtained a promise of branch line construction in the sale of the Peace River lines to the Northern Alberta Railway (NAR), a jointly owned subsidiary of the CPR and CNR.[34] The Central Canada Railway reached Berwyn in 1922, Whitelaw in 1924, Fairview in 1928, and Hine's Creek in 1931. The Grande Prairie branch also extended westward to Wembley in 1924, Hythe in 1928, and

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[31] NAC, Railways, RG 43, vol. 534, file 16860, Lake Saskatoon Board of Trade to Arthur Meighen, January 7, 1918. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 374A, Oliver to Greenfield, September 27, 1922.

[32] The Department of the Interior claimed construction of this line was well underway in 1916. Canada, Interior, *Annual Report*, 1917, 19. PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.61.1, John Oliver to Greenfield, October 15, 1921. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 374A, United Farmers of Peace River Block to Greenfield, December 15, 1921. *Record*, January 26, 1921 and April 27, 1921. *Herald*, August 10, 1921. This route was eventually dropped from railway plans in favour of the Grande Prairie extension. NAC, Railways, RG 43, vol. 497, file 14635, E.M.M. Hill to William Burns, December 28, 1927.

[33] *Record*, April 27, 1921. PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 200, V.W. Smith to Greenfield, april 30, 1923. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 388, H.A. Robson to Greenfield, June 28, 1923.

[34] PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.103.3, E.W. Beatty to Brownlee, September 17, 1928. For all of the Dominion correspondence on this issue see Sessional Papers, 1929, no. 278.

Dawson Creek in 1931.[35] These extensions, however, failed to fulfil the objectives of the Peace River settlers. By 1923, they sought a shorter route to Vancouver rather than continued extension of the ED & BC. As the railway advanced slowly westward, it merely magnified the long haul southeast to Edmonton and away from the west coast markets. The railway clearly travelled in the wrong direction.

The Fort St. John district, moreover, remained isolated from the railway. The 800 to 1000 foot deep Peace River valley stood between the district and the closest railway point at Dawson Creek. Farmers could travel the road through the valley only with double teams on wagons or half loaded trucks. During wet weather, the route was completely impassable. The nearest railway point on the north side of the River, Hine's Creek, was nearly 150 miles away, and despite pleas for an extension of this line, no efforts were made. A railway from the west seemed the best possibility.

Although modern transportation links to the Peace River country from the southeast had been established, few in the Peace country were satisfied with the transportation network. Alexander Mackenzie had used the Peace River region as the starting point for his trip to the Pacific, and most Peace River settlers and boosters sought to fulfil this vision in the modern era. A rail line through the northern Rocky Mountains connecting the Peace River region with the coast had been considered by the CPR in the 1870s, by both the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific after the turn of the century, and by the Pacific Great Eastern Railway prior to the Great War. All three transcontinental railways, however, chose alternative routes for their main lines, and the Pacific Great Eastern went bankrupt during the war and never completed construction of its rail line.[36] The early work by these railway companies sparked the controversy over the Peace River outlet railway which dominated transportation issues in the region until the 1950s.

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[35] *Record*, January 12, 1922, June 14, 1928, September 28, 1928, and November 8, 1929. *Herald*, May 4, 1928, May 18, 1928, and November 2, 1928. *Block News*, January 13, 1931.

[36] For information on the CPR route selection see W. Kaye Lamb, *History of the Canadian Pacific Railway*, (New York, 1977), 79-80. Both the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific had secured options to build via Yellowhead or Peace Pass by 1903. The GTP chose the Yellowhead route following James Macoun's negative report, and

At the time of the first settlement wave, few suspected that a railway to the Pacific would not be built in the immediate future. Many of the pamphlets circulated between 1907 and 1914 advocating settlement in the Peace River region had suggested that a coast outlet would be built. Boosters such as A.M. Bezanson, the author of the popular *Peace River Trail*, were certain a railway to the coast would be built. Bezanson even selected a townsite at the proposed GTP crossing of the Smoky River. Stories about the possibility of the ED & BC, the PGE, or the CNR building through the Rocky Mountains surfaced regularly prior to 1920.[37] A coast outlet seemed ostensible and logical, and many advocated building the line sooner rather than later.[38]

By 1921, however, all the early hope for a coast outlet seemed in doubt. The PGE corporation had collapsed in 1918 and the B.C. government had assumed control of the rail line. Similarly, the Alberta government had been forced to takeover the ED & BC lines in 1920. Neither of these governments had the financial resources or the

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competition led the Canadian Northern to follow suit. Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North*, 202-4 and Zaslow, "Transportation and Development," 97-8 and 129-32. Although ostensibly connected to the Grand Trunk Pacific, the plan to push the PGE to Peace River appeared to be an ill conceived effort to obtain more financing for the financially plagued project. See PABC, B.C. Railways, GR 818, McBride Correspondence, file 4, McBride to Borden, December 5, 1914; Patricia Roy, "Railways, Politicians and Vancouver," Master's Thesis, University of Toronto, 1963, 201; and "A Historical Sketch of the PGE," *Northwest Digest* 8 (May-June, 1952), 2-7. For a popular account of the PGE see Bruce Ramsay, *P.G.E.: Railway to the North*, (Vancouver: Mitchel Press, 1962).

[37] *Record*, May 12, 1916, October 13, 1916, March 1, 1918, March 28, 1919 and September 29, 1920. *Herald*, May 30, 1916, January 31, 1918, and February 12, 1918. These rumours had a significant impact on the settlers. For example see Clyde Campbell's letters in Moyles, ed., *Challenge of the Homestead*, 4-20.

[38] GMA, Albright Papers, M 8, file 20, Beaverlodge UFA to Vancouver Board of Trade, December 11, 1911. PABC, B.C. Railways, GR 818, McBride Correspondence, file 1, Walter Moberly to Premier McBride, August 21, 1912, and *ibid.*, file 5, L.L. Gullivan to McBride, February 1, 1915.

jurisdictional authority to provide an inter-provincial railway to the coast. An enquiry into the PGE debacle, furthermore, concluded that building into the Peace River country could not be justified financially.[39] The pleas for a shorter outlet railway to the coast intensified, nevertheless, as farmers in the region continued to pay high freight rates, the condition of the Dunvegan lines deteriorated, and the region suffered the effects of the post-war recession.[40]

A possible solution appeared at this time. The Canadian National Railway expressed an interest in opening the Hoppe Coal fields at the head waters of the Smoky River. The railway line to access this field from the Canadian National mainline at Brulé would become viable by extending it into the agricultural territory of the Peace country.[41] The CNR President, Sir Henry Thornton was determined to build the line. He informed the federal Minister of Railways:

> From the point of view of agricultural development and interests, there are reasons why the line should be constructed as soon as possible, but from the point of view of coal and other mineral developments, the necessity is even more pressing.[42]

Rumours that the CNR was interested in the Brulé cutoff led to a quick response and intense lobbying efforts from the Peace country.[43] A study of the Hoppe coal field, moreover, reported that it contained a high quality semi-anthracite coal superior to most Pacific coast coal.[44] As a result, in 1923, E.M.M. Hill surveyed the route for the CNR, and his report suggested that favourable grades could be attained and development prospects appeared promising.[45] The CNR prepared to build the line with the support of the King administration.[46] One year later, the project was in disarray.

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[39] J.G. Sullivan, "Report on the Engineering and Economic Features of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway," R 15. A copy of this report is found in PABC, GR 1222, Box 248, file 4.

[40] *Record*, November 23, 1922, May 17, 1923, and June 21, 1923. *Herald*, February 7, 1922, February 14, 1922, and March 28, 1922. A delegation financed by the M.D. of Bear Lake, No. 740, went to Ottawa to lobby for outlet in 1923. PAA, County of Grande Prairie, Acc. 70.209, Item 8a, Minutes of M.D. of Bear Lake, March 1, 1924.

[41] Grande Prairie had suggested the Brulé route in 1915. *Herald*, January 5, 1915 and February 3, 1915. The first note in the CNR files on the Peace River outlet is a memo dated February 5, 1920 on the Hoppe Coal field. This would suggest that the interest of the railway was triggered by this project. The first reference in Sir Henry Thornton's personal files is a memo dated February 26, 1923 regarding the completion of the CNR line from Whitecourt to the Peace.

[42] NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, Thornton to Graham, April 18, 1923.

Support for the Brulé cut-off reached its peak in the spring of 1924. The Alberta legislature, the Edmonton Board of Trade, the Peace River Board of Trade, the Grande Prairie *Herald*, and the Vancouver *Sun* all advocated building the line.[47] The proposed rail line, however, brought the issue of a route to the forefront of the coast outlet debate. The geography of the Peace River region, the lack of adequate crossings on the Peace River and several of its tributaries and sheer size of the region, suggested that different sections would perceive one route as preferable over another. The studies by the Grand Trunk Pacific and Pacific Great Eastern in the early settlement era of the Peace had indicated that a number of possible routes existed. R.W. Jones, the GTP surveyor, had analysed the Peace River pass route, the Pine pass route, and the Wapiti pass route.[48] The Pacific Great Eastern had surveyed the area north of Prince George to connect with the GTP line through Pine Pass.[49] Each settlement island in the region favoured an alternative route to the coast. No less than five routes with variations, as illustrated in Map 26, "Proposed Routes for a Coast Outlet Railway," would be considered. Each offered advantages to a different section.

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[43] NAC, CNR, vol 3059, Norman Soars (Peace River Board of Trade) to Thornton, March 16, 1923. NAC, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers MG 26 J 1 (Hereafter WLMK Papers), vol. 104, 80802, J. Sutherland (Grande Prairie Liberal Assoc.) to King, April 1, 1923. *Ibid.*, vol. 92, 73008-9, Frank Matheson (Grande Prairie) to Robert Forke, April 5, 1923. *Ibid.*, vol. 89, 70936, Resolution of the Edmonton Board of Trade, May 16, 1923. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 376, Greenfield to King, April 24, 1923.

[44] Canada, *Journals of the House of Commons,* 1923, Appendix 6, "Proceedings and Evidence of the Select Standing Committee on Mines and Minerals," 38-50.

[45] NAC, CNR, vol. 7327, E.M.M. Hill to Gzowski, November 9, 1923. *Ibid.*, vol 7337, Envelope 1, "Report of E.M.M. Hill, November 1923."

[46] NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, Gzowski to George Graham, December 20, 1923 and Undated Memo to Min. of Railways stating CNR intended to build line. *Ibid.*, vol 7327, "Proposed Bill for Construction of Brulé Cut-off, 1923." The charter for the line was included in the CNR Branch Lines Bill defeated by the Senate in 1923.

[47] NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, N. Soars (Peace River Board of Trade) to Thornton, March 14, 1924. *Ibid.*, John Blue (Edmonton Board of Trade) to Thornton, March 18, 1924. *Ibid.*, R.J Cromie (editor of the Vancouver *Sun*) to Thornton, June 23, 1924. *Ibid.*, vol. 7327, H.F. Kellner (Edmonton City Council) to Thornton, March 19, 1924. All of the Alberta MLAs cabled or wrote King on February 25, 1924. See for example NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 113, 86200, George Johnson (MLA Wetaskiwin) to King, February 25, 1924 and *Ibid.*, vol. 117, 89404, Alex Moore (MLA Cochrane) to King, February 25, 1924. They also sent King a copy of the Legislature motion April 8, 1924 calling for construction of the Brulé line. *Ibid.*, vol. 111, 85341-3. A favourable report also appeared in the *Bulletin* June 23, 1924.

The Brulé cut-off -- later referred to as the Obed line -- was not a true coast outlet railway for most areas of the Peace country (see Map 26). It did shorten the distance from the region to the west coast considerably over the circuitous ED & BC route, but it did not breach the Rocky Mountains. Instead, it called for a direct southern route to be constructed from Sturgeon Lake to the Athabasca watershed and then to the CNR Yellowhead mainline. While it served the interests of the Grande Prairie district, it required all rail traffic in the other districts of the Peace River country to accumulate at the southeastern corner of the district before beginning the route to the west coast ports. This upset many districts to the north and west of Grande Prairie which preferred alternative routes through the mountain passes. They supported the Brulé line as a branch line serving the Grande Prairie district, but refused to accept it as a coast outlet railway. Farmers at Beaverlodge went so far as to argue the only cut-off option Brulé provided to the area was the "right as a tax-payer to cut-off their heads by financing the route."[50]

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[48] GMA, Hugh Allen Papers, M 10, file 5, R.W. Jones to Grande Prairie Board of Trade, undated. NAC, RG 43, Vol 306, 4402, C. Schreiber to Min. of Railways and Canals, November 8, 1906.

[49] PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 265a, Memo to File, December 8, 1938.

The CPR provided the opponents of the Brulé line with hope for an alternative. Fearing that the CNR would cut them out of a possibly lucrative new district and that their lease on the Dunvegan lines would become worthless, the CPR sent R. James and C.R. Crysdale to perform reconnaissance surveys through the Peace River and Pine passes in 1923.[51] Rumours soon spread that the CPR had interest in developing the Hudson's Hope coal field and building a line to Naas Bay and the Portland Canal.[52] The *Record*, reported that the CPR appeared ready to purchase the PGE railway from the B.C. government and provide the Peace River region with the desired outlet railway through Peace Pass. It therefore intensified the campaign against the Brulé cut-off.[53] The CPR actions also led other interested parties to enter into the discussions and lobby for their respective routes.[54]

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[50] The Beaverlodge farmers protested the Brulé route in a letter to *Record* April 24, 1924 and October 30, 1924. They also wrote to Thornton. NAC, CNR, vol 3059, Beaverlodge Farmers to Thornton, undated. Their criticism echoed the Peace River Board of Trade. It supported the "CNR branch line," but called for a coast outlet via Peace Pass. See copies of the letter Norman Soars to Premier Oliver, April 24, 1924 in PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 376 and NAC, CNR, vol. 3059. The attitude of the Peace River Board of Trade hardened into outright opposition by December 1924. NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, Soars to Prince Rupert Board of Trade, December 23, 1924 (Copy). People in the Fort St. John district were also critical. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 105, 81546-8, Fort St. John Agricultural Society to King, March 22, 1924. By 1925, J.K. Cornwall emerged as another prominent opponent of the route. *Sun*, February 4, 1925. Protests in the *Peace River Record* began in 1923. *Record*, March 22, 1923, March 29, 1923, March 6, 1924, and March 20, 1924. The *Record* October 2, 1924 front page editorial was especially important and provided a detailed critique of the project. Entitled "One Real Outlet Must Serve Entire Country," it appeared in PABC, Pattullo Papers, Add.MSS 3, box 17, file 2, and NAC, CNR, vol. 7377, envelope 2.

[51] E.W. Beatty suggested that the CPR pursued a defensive policy against the CNR in the 1920s, and this appears to have been the motivation behind many CPR programs in the Peace River region. E.W. Beatty to Standing Committee on Railways Canals and Telegraphs, November 17, 1932. Reference in PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 370. Zaslow argued that an agitation from Stewart B.C. to build via the northern route had a similar CPR defensive strategy at its focus. See "Development of the Mackenzie Basin," 88.

[52] *Record*, May 17, 1923.

Both provincial governments also sensed that a coast outlet project might either relieve them of their newly acquired and heavily indebted railways or leave them with unwarranted and virtually worthless railway lines.[55] British Columbia politicians were especially concerned. The Liberal Premier, John Oliver repeatedly informed the King government of his rejection of the Brulé line and his desire for a Peace River outlet railway to connect with the PGE at Prince George.[56] The Minister of Railways, George Graham noted, "[o]ur friend Oliver is moving heaven and earth to get us committed to either taking over or operating that white elephant of his," and suggested of all the provincial railways it was the worst.[57] The King government could not ignore the mounting protests.

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[53] *Record*, June 21, 1923, September 6, 1923, October 2, 1924, November 27, 1924 and December 11, 1924.

[54] NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 123, 93121-2, Stewart Board of Trade to King, October 10, 1924. *Ibid.*, vol. 111, 85245, Memorial from Smithers Board of Trade to King, Fall 1924. NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, Prince George Board of Trade to Thornton, April 3, 1924.

[55] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 376, Greenfield to King, April 24, 1923. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 100, 77778-82, John Oliver to King, February 13, 1923. *Record*, June 21, 1923.

[56] Mr. McBride (Cariboo) spoke against Brulé on June 29, 1923 thus indicating a trend which continued into 1924. House of Commons, *Debates*, 1923, 4698-4701. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 113, 86307, Oliver to Dr. J.H. King (Minister of Public Works), April 8, 1924. *Ibid.*, vol. 119, 90174-5, Oliver to F.C. Wade, July 21, 1924. *Ibid.*, vol. 119, 90167, Oliver to W.L.M. King, August 11, 1924. Oliver made his opposition public in November, 1924. See *Record*, November 20, 1924. Oliver continued his campaign against the Brulé cut-off into 1925. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 139, 10368, Oliver to King, March 18, 1925 and *Ibid.*, 103402-9, Oliver to Graham, April 30, 1925. Thornton had rejected the B.C. overtures for a CNR takeover of the PGE and a route via Peace or Pine Pass in 1923. NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, Thornton to J.D. MacLean (B.C. Minister of Railways), December 5, 1923.

[57] NAC, WLMK Papers, reel C2265, 85145, Graham to King, September 21, 1924.

Politically King had reason to fear making any decision on the outlet railway. Although a coast outlet railway would be popular in B.C., the B.C. Attorney General, C.M. Manson, later informed King in a "non-official, personal letter" that any move to approve the Brulé line would be met with a storm of protest from British Columbia Liberals. The only B.C. Liberal supporting King was the editor of the Vancouver *Sun*, Robert Cromie, and Manson wrote "[t]he devil himself knoweth not what is in the mind of Robert J."[58] The Conservative opposition, moreover, was attempting to force a commitment from King so that they could exploit it in British Columbia.[59] Given King's precarious position with respect to the Progressives on the prairies, he could ill afford to lose support in the coast province. A statement about the Peace River country and the coast outlet was necessary, nevertheless, and, consequently, in October 1924, King announced at Edmonton and Vancouver that he would make the Peace River country the spearhead of a renewed immigration campaign. At the same time, he committed the government to an outlet railway "when financially viable according to railway engineers."[60]

King's speech, although non-committal, was received joyfully in the Grande Prairie district. The *Herald* reported that the Prime Minister had promised a railway for the region, and many in the district accepted that interpretation.[61] King, however, continued to obfuscate and delay. He agreed to Greenfield's request for a conference on the subject, and the Premiers of Alberta and British Columbia, the federal Minister of Railways, and the presidents of the CNR and CPR met on January 9, 1925. Little real progress was made, but the conference agreed that joint study by CNR and CPR engineers should be conducted.[62] The engineers from the companies met January 16 and had prepared a draft proposal by February 26, but the final report was not tabled in the House of Commons until 1926.[63]

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[58] NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 137, 101765-6, C.M. Manson to King, March 19, 1925. See *Sun* October 21, 1924 for an example of Cromie's enthusiasm for the Brulé line.

[59] NAC, Meighen Papers, 84102, S.F. Tolmie to Meighen, October 15, 1924.

[60] *Journal*, October 11, 1924. *Bulletin*, October 11, 1924. *Record*, October 16, 1924. *Province*, October 22, 1924. *Evening Sun*, October 22, 1924.

[61] *Herald*, October 14, 1924. The Grande Prairie Liberal Association was stirred by King's announcement. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 123, 92923, J.H. Sissons to King, October 21, 1924. On March 30, 1925, D.M. Kennedy presented a telegram from a mass meeting at Grande Prairie claiming King had promised an outlet in his speech. House of Commons, *Debates*, 1925, 1651.

By the time Charles Dunning, the new Minister of Railways, made the report public, circumstances in the Peace River region had changed. The critical economic situation in the Peace River country had been alleviated in the interim by the freight rate reductions granted on the ED & BC and on the routes to Vancouver culminating in the spring of 1925.[64] Although economically the importance of an outlet had been reduced, the demand for construction did not disappear entirely. Jack Sissons informed the Prime Minister that freight rate reductions would not substitute for an outlet and other Peace River residents agreed.[65] In this regard, statements by Sir Henry Thornton that an outlet would be constructed when Peace River grain production reached 10,000,000 bushels (more than double the 1925 totals) also tempered the response in the district.[66]

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[62] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, 376, Premier's notes for statement made to conference. House of Commons, *Debates*, 306. Alberta, *Sessional Papers*, 1925, no. 48. *Record*, January 15, 1925. *Sun*, February 24, 1925. Zaslow, "Peace River Outlet," 282. King received plaudits from the press for his conciliatory approach. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol 145, 10672-3, F.N. Southam to King, January 10, 1925.

[63] NAC, CNR, vol. 7327, Memorandum to File regarding Meeting of CNR and CPR Engineers, January 16, 1925. PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 265a, "Report of Various Routes for a Western Outlet to the Pacific from the Peace River District," February 26, 1925. *Joint Report of engineers of the Canadian National Railways and the Canadian Pacific Railway regarding construction of a railway from the Peace River Country to the Pacific Coast*, Sessional Paper No. 237, 1926. The Minister presented it to the House on June 10, 1926. *Journals of the House of Commons*, 1926, 406.

[64] The district had requested a freight rate reduction in 1922. PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.150.1, "United Farmers of the Peace River Block to Alberta Government, February 14, 1922. *Province*, February 24, 1925. *Record*, January 17, 1924, April 2, 1925, and September 3, 1925. *Herald*, June 8, 1925. Zaslow, "Peace River Outlet," 282. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 68-70.

[65] NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 144, Sissons to King, March 19, 1925. *Ibid.*, vol. 137, 102110, O.M. Melness to King, March 24, 1925. *Ibid.*, vol. 138, 102268, Edmonton

The report, when finally released, contained a devastating critique of the coast outlet proposals. It discussed the Obed, Wapiti pass, Monkman pass, Pine pass, and Peace pass routes from the Peace country and concluded that the Obed line was the cheapest, easiest to construct, and most cost effective. Even this route, however, was dismissed. To make any outlet railway sustainable, significant branch line development would be necessary to move traffic to a central location. This expense, when combined with the construction costs of the outlet itself, made the coast outlet economically unviable.

Sir Henry Thornton called the report "unduly pessimistic," yet according to the CNR Bureau of Economics, it might be considered unduly optimistic.[67] The Bureau concluded that any new route to the Peace Country would ruin the ED & BC. Even if the new line received two-thirds of all the traffic connected to the district it would lose one million dollars per year.[68] The traffic from the Peace River region simply did not warrant two railways. Any coast outlet railway, consequently, would necessitate the abandonment of the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia rail line. Even this action, the report noted, would not ensure the success of the coast outlet, and it would increase settler's costs and make shipping goods into the Peace River region from

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Board of Trade to King, April 9, 1925. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 376, D.W. Patterson to Greenfield, June 13, 1925.

[66] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 374A, Thornton to Greenfield, August 4, 1925. *Record*, June 4, 1925. W.D. Albright, "Past, Present and Future of the Peace," *Canadian Geographical Journal* 16 (1938), 132.

[67] NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, Thornton to Maj. G.A. Bell (Deputy Minister of Railways), March 10, 1925.

[68] PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 85, "Proposed Extension -- Canadian National Railway -- Brulé to Grande Prairie," January 18, 1924. NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, Bureau of Economics to Thornton, March 11, 1925. *Ibid.*, vol. 7327, Gzowski to Hungerford, March 30, 1925.

Edmonton more expensive.

The campaign for an outlet railway did not end in 1925, although it lacked the immediacy of the 1923 to 1925 period. The people of the Peace now had a vested emotional, rather than economic, interest in the completion of the project. The Peace River region demanded the coast outlet as a recognition of its achievements, and viewed the failure to build it as a symbol of southern Canadian broken promises.[69] The booster community constantly reminded both King and Thornton of their statements on the outlet issue. "Peace River Production Warrants Immediate Transportation to Pacific," screamed one headline recalling Thornton's 10,000,000 bushel statements. Another suggested "Peace River Wants Premier King and Thornton to Make Good Their Promises."[70] The region was especially critical of the government support for the Hudson Bay Railroad.[71] Charles Frederick called the government's stance "Parliamentary Piffle." He wrote:

> After finding that the construction of a coast outlet is "feasible from an engineering standpoint," they proceed to state that "on economic grounds" construction should not be commenced forthwith. For pure, unmitigated gall displayed by the puny politicians of Ottawa, this finding stands without parallel. In the face of the colossal waste ... on the Hudson's Bay project, the finding of the railway committee reads like the special pleading of a blackleg lawyer.[72]

The emphasis of the campaign, consequently, became an enunciation of the booster belief in the future prospects of the region.

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[69] Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 82-88 and "Peace River Outlet," 282. PAA, Gauvreau Papers, Acc. 66.135, J 13, Draft Manuscript on the History of the Peace, 1932. Gauvreau called the coast outlet a "shameful" experience and commented "a promise made is a debt unpaid."

[70] *Record*, October 27, 1927 and October 18, 1929. *Journal*, March 2, 1928.

[71] Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 39. *Record*, December 18, 1924, January 21, 1926, March 10, 1927, and April 14, 1927. *Journal* April 2, 1926. NAC, CNR, vol. 3060, L.C. Porteous to Thornton, April 18, 1927. The comparison between the Hudson Bay Railroad and the Peace River outlet continued into the 1930s. *Journal* February 18, 1932.

[72] *Record*, April 14, 1927.

D.M. Kennedy, the UFA Member of Parliament for Peace River, led the campaign against the report in the House of Commons. He introduced a motion February 14, 1927 claiming, "[t]hat, in the opinion of this House, the time has arrived for the commencement forthwith and the completion in the near future of a direct railway outlet from the Peace River Country to the Pacific coast."[73] The ensuing debate led to a discussion of the engineer's report in the House Standing Committee on Railways, Telegraphs, and Canals. During three days of hearings in March, the committee heard testimony from the CNR and CPR engineers, the Premiers of Alberta and B.C., and the Department of the Interior about the conditions in the Peace and the proposed railway outlet. Kennedy disputed the report's conclusion that the traffic should initially bear the entire cost of the project and that future development did not look promising. Despite his criticism and Premier John Oliver's desperate pleas, the committee and the Parliament eventually supported the railway engineers.[74]

That the railways did not give up on the Peace River outlet entirely in the wake of the report is interesting. The engineers' study contained devastating criticisms of the economics of any future railway development. The railway companies, however, like the Geological Survey teams of the 1870s and the settlers who followed, had been captured by the image of the region. Thornton, for example, following his visit to the region and taking note of the interest shown in the region by southern communities argued the region had great potential. He wrote:

> Look at the map and think it over, and I believe you will agree with me. But it means we must have the Dunvegan road....The more I think about it the more convinced I am that we must have it at any price....I believe there is more money to the north of the Peace River Block than there is in the Block itself.[75]

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[73] House of Commons, *Debates*, 1926-7, 251.

[74] House of Commons, *Select Standing Committee on Railways, Canals, and Telegraph Lines: Minutes and Proceedings*, March 15, 18 and 25, 1927. House of Commons, *Debates*, 1926-7, 2138, 2401, and 2419. *Record*, April 14 and April 28, 1927

[75] NAC, CNR, vol. 3060, Thornton to Hungerford, November 9, 1927.

An excerpt from a CPR report written during the Depression provides another indication of the powerful affect the region had on the railway surveyors. The engineers wrote:

> Since the days of Mackenzie and Harmon of the Northwest Fur Company it has been known that a majestic river having forced its imperious way through the Rocky Mountains to seek an outlet in the Arctic, had cut for itself a channel through a plain, which gave promise of being a land of plenty. Every visitor who has viewed that territory has fallen under the spell of its beauty and has refused to fix a limit to its possibilities.[76]

This sentiment led the railways once again to consider the outlet issue.

One of Kennedy's most succinct criticisms had been the lack of accurate survey work on the Peace Pass route to the coast. As the second settlement wave roared into the Peace Country, and the CNR entered into a bidding war with the CPR for control of the ED & BC railway, Thornton decided to obtain better information on the Peace Pass route. Contradictory information on Peace Pass had existed for years. H.W. Foster had surveyed the area for the Canadian Northern in 1912 and reported unfavourably upon the route. Not only were the resources of the Finlay Forks region exaggerated, he concluded, but since no adequate crossing of the Peace River could be made between Hudson Hope and Fort Vermilion, two distinct railways would be necessary in the Peace River region.[77] Just eight years later, a Canadian National survey team led by V.H. Williams reported that the Finlay Forks region offered splendid potential and predicted that coal, gold, and possible oil resources could all be exploited by tapping the Peace River region through this route.[78] The CPR surveyors, R. James and C.R. Crysdale, had also supported the Peace Pass as a viable route to the coast in their 1923 report.

E.M.M. Hill was sent to conduct a reconnaissance survey of the Peace Pass route in 1928. In two reports from that expedition he summarised the difficulty of building an outlet for the Peace River region.

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[76] NAC, CNR, vol. 7337, Canadian National Synopsis Report, 1945, 54. This report contained a summary of all railway surveys in the Peace. The quote is from the CPR: Peace River Outlet Survey, 1931.

[77] PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 85, H.W. Foster to William Mackenzie, October 3, 1912.

[78] NAC, CNR, vol. 3059, V.H. Williams, "Report of Reconnaissance Survey From Vanderhoof B.C. Northerly and Easterly to the Interprovincial Boundary via Peace River Pass, 1920."

> I have been many times asked why the valleys are so much more difficult to cross than the valleys of the Saskatchewan....The Saskatchewan River has relatively low banks, maximum height 350 feet while the banks of the Peace River upstream from Peace River Crossing are nowhere less than 700 feet and in many places over 1400 feet high. Its principal tributaries, the Smoky, Pine, Beatton, and Halfway Rivers, all have very deep valleys with unstable banks 500 to 1000 feet high.[79]

Building along the north side of the River to Peace Pass, he argued, was impossible due to the deep, shifting banks of the Beatton River valley. This 1000 foot deep gorge could not be crossed and thus required the railway to build well north of the agricultural lands on the plateaux in the vicinity of Clear Hills.[80] The Obed line, consequently, remained a preferred option. Peace River settlers continued to demand a railway between Hine's Creek and Fort St. John in spite of Hill's report, but their pleas remained unanswered.[81]

In an aside which had far reaching ramifications, Hill noted that few settlers in the Peace required an outlet as much as branch line development.[82] His reports changed the approach of the two railways towards Peace River rail development. Both the Alberta and British Columbia governments continued to push for a Dominion takeover of their rail lines and the incorporation of these lines in a coast outlet project.[83] Rather than build an outlet, the CNR and CPR attempted to access the growing wealth of the Peace

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[79] NAC, CNR, vol. 7337, Envelope 1, Report of E.M.M. Hill, March 4, 1929.

[80] E.M.M. Hill, *The Peace Pass Route to the Pacific Coast*, Sessional Paper No. 157, 1928 (Ottawa, 1928). *Journal*, March 5, 1928.

[81] Brownlee actually suggested construction in this direction following the sale to the NAR. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 231, Brownlee to Beatty, October 10, 1929. The strongest demands came from B.C.. NAC, Bennett Papers, 380030, George Teather (Cecil Lake) to Bennett, February 11, 1935. *Block News*, August 31, 1934, March 1, 1935, and August 4, 1938.

[82] *Journal*, March 6, 1928.

[83] PAA, Alberta Department of Railways (hereafter Alta. Railways), Acc. 84.388, file 1100.150.1, John Callaghan to S.J. Hungerford, May 18, 1926.

River region by purchasing the ED & BC railway and building branch lines.[84] As a result, negotiations for the sale or lease of the Alberta Government rail lines dominated the discussions in the district. Brownlee astutely played the two companies against one another in order to increase the price. Despite an early offer from Sir Henry Thornton to build an outlet as part of the purchase, Brownlee refused to accept the price offered.[85] He sought a higher cash value and a promise of branch line construction. When the CPR finally won the bidding war, Beatty offered a one half share in the line to the CNR to keep Thornton from building into the country and ruining the old line. The joint purchase of the Dunvegan lines by the CNR and CPR in 1929 reduced the incentives for either company to build an outlet. Both had an interest in the health of the new Northern Alberta Railways.

Peace River understood the ramifications and resented Brownlee's actions.[86] Meanwhile, a strident campaign for an outlet came from British Columbia, and particularly, the editor of the Vancouver *Sun* and business interests in Vancouver, Prince George, Prince Rupert, and Stewart. In a series of editorials and letters to politicians coinciding with harvest in the Peace Country, R.J. Cromie demanded settlement in the Peace be encouraged and an outlet constructed.[87] His activity maintained an interest in the issue in British Columbia, and volunteer associations to promote the Peace River outlet were formed in Vancouver and Prince Rupert. Northern B.C. M.P.s meanwhile continued to press King in the House of Commons.[88]

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[84] The ED & BC had produced a large operating surplus since 1927. *Journal*, March 24, 1928. *Record* October 4, 1929.

[85] Thornton had offered to construct an outlet following three consecutive fifteen million bushel crops during the 1925 lease discussions. PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.101.2, "Proposal of CNR in the PEACE RIVER DISTRICT." *Journal*, March 12, 1928, March 13, 1928, March 22, 1928 and March 23, 1928.

[86] *Record*, March 15, 1929. Brownlee's position became clear in 1930. He opposed an application for a charter through Monkman Pass because the Alberta government was honour bound to the new NAR. *Journal*, February 22, 1930 and March 4, 1930.

[87] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 395a, Cromie to Brownlee, September 24, 1928. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 168, 121750-6, Gardiner to King, September 23, 1927, *Ibid.*, vol. 192, 136779-80, Cromie to King, September 26, 1929. *Ibid.*, 136784, Cromie to King, September 28, 1929. *Sun*, September 10, 1927, September 27, 1927, September 21, 1928, September 25, 1929, and October 2, 1929. Pressure also came for the Conservative press. For example see the *Province*, October 14, 1928.

The campaign produced results just as the Depression emerged as a problem for all railway development in Canada. During the run-up to the summer 1930 federal election, both King and Bennett pledged to make efforts to construct a coast outlet railway.[89] The CPR meanwhile participated in the British Columbia government's survey of resources along the prospective route of the PGE in 1929 and 1930, and at the request of Prime Minister Bennett conducted a new study of Peace River outlet routes to connect with the PGE in 1931. The CPR activity worried Thornton and, consequently, the CNR took a limited interest in the project.[90] Although the CPR study concluded that Peace Pass was the preferred option for the route, the financial implications of the project led the CNR engineer C.S. Gzowski to remark, "[i]t appears to me we have the Canadian Pacific in a helpless position."[91]

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[88] PABC, Pattullo Papers, Add.MSS 3, Box 33, file 10. "Circular of the Prince Rupert to Peace River Outlet Association." The associations were endorsed by the people of the Peace River region. *Record*, December 6, 1929. *Block News*, May 13, 1930. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce and the annual convention of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce also supported an outlet from the Peace. *Record*, September 13, 1929 and September 20, 1929. For activity in the Commons see House of Commons, *Debates*, 1928, 3998-4006, and *Record*, June 15, 1928.

[89] King actually continued to equivocate suggesting he supported a coast outlet but railways had to select a route. *Record*, November 15, 1929. *Journal*, November 8, 1929. *Prince Rupert Daily News*, November 12, 1929. In Vancouver, a promise to stop the railway "dilly-dallying" taken as promise of outlet. *Province*, November 16, 1929 and *Sun*, November 16, 1929. He actually promised to build the outlet in the House of Commons, May 28, 1930. House of Commons *Debates*, 1930, 2761. *Bulletin*, July 11, 1930.

[90] NAC, Transport, RG 12, vol. 2488, file 3428-11-1, Beatty to Thornton, January 14, 1929. *Ibid.*, Thornton to Tolmie, January 16, 1929. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 209, 147106-7, E.W. Beatty to T.A. Crerar, May 9, 1930. NAC, CNR, vol. 7327, R.B. Bennett to Thornton, January 28, 1931. Thornton proved unwilling to study any route which connected with the PGE. NAC, Bennett Papers, 380166-73, Thornton to Manion, February 4, 1931. Reports of the CPR and CNR activity in the Peace region can be found in *Record*, February 14, 1930, May 16, 1930, and February 27, 1931. *Block News*, November 25, 1930, April 14, 1931 and April 21, 1931. *Province*, May 18, 1930.

While the railway studies continued to question the economic viability of the Peace River outlet, the issue was at the forefront of debate in Parliament. D.M. Kennedy and his B.C. allies continued to press for a resolution of the issue.[92] The new Prime Minister found himself besieged by letters from Vancouver and Northern B.C. demanding his election promise be fulfilled. All suggested the railway construction project would make an excellent public works, relief project.[93] The economic justification of a coast outlet railway also resurfaced in the Peace River country at this time. Fearing an exodus of settlers similar to the post-war recession, residents there wrote to the Prime Minister, the Premiers, and the Railways throughout the 1930s. In each case they called for the government to fulfil past promises and build the outlet as a relief project.[94]

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[91] NAC, CNR, vol. 7338, envelope 4, "CNR Study of figures used in Canadian Pacific Report on Peace Outlet, 1931." *Ibid.*, vol. 7327, Gzowski to the Bureau of Economics, May 14, 1931. A summary of the CPR findings is found in PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 165, file 1, "Summary Report on Certain Phases of the Proposed Railway Routes for a Western Outlet to the Pacific from the Peace River District," July 23, 1943. It appears that the main problem facing the CPR was the need to include the PGE in any outlet proposal it made since it had no through route to the Pacific. Also see *ibid.*, Box 244, file 10, C.R. Crysdale to S.F. Tolmie, February 26, 1932, and *ibid.*, Crysdale Estimate - Construction Only, March 16, 1932.

[92] House of Commons, *Debates*, 1930, 64-5, 1789-1803, and 2761. *Ibid.*, 1931, 360, 890, 1871, 3137, 3934, and 4021.

[93] NAC, Bennett Papers, 380107-8, City of Vancouver to Bennett, September 4, 1930. *Ibid.*, 491619-22, Associated Boards of Trade of Central B.C. to Bennett, September 5, 1930. *Ibid.*, 380115, Vancouver Board of Trade to Bennett, September 8, 1930. *Ibid.*, 380118, City of North Vancouver to Bennett, September 10, 1930. *Ibid.*, 380120, City of Prince Rupert to Bennett, September 10, 1930. *Ibid.*, 380112-3, Prince Rupert to Peace River Outlet Association to Bennett, October 10, 1930. *Ibid.*, 380131-2, S.F. Tolmie to Bennett, January 14, 1931. *Ibid.*, 380248, C.E. Tisdale (On to the Peace Association) to Bennett, September 26, 1931. *Ibid.*, 380260, Prince Rupert Chamber of Commerce to Bennett, September 30, 1931. *Sun* June 15, 1931.

[94] NAC, Bennett Papers, 256985-6, T.R. Wilson (Peace River Conservative Association) to Bennett, January 7, 1931. *Ibid.*, 380205, Rolla Board of Trade to

As a result of the pressure, Bennett called upon the railway companies to once again report to Parliament upon the possibility of a coast outlet railway. C.R. Crysdale, C.S. Gzowski, and J.M. Fairbairn reviewed the outlet studies and reported to the Minister, R.J. Manion on December 11, 1931.[95] The report tabled in the House in February 1932 simply re-iterated the railway's position from 1925. It contained almost no new information, and like its predecessors, recommended against building any outlet railway at the present time. In the meantime, the Duff Commission reported that the Canadian railway system was in crisis.[96]

"Indignation seethed in the Peace River district" following the report from Ottawa.[97] The residents complained that joint ownership of the NAR blocked any immediate solution to the outlet issue, and blamed Dominion politicians and self-interested Alberta and British Columbia governments for the failure of the outlet to materialise. The *Journal* editorialist pointed out that many in Peace River could accept that an outlet would not be built during an economic crisis, but complained that the engineers' report suggested an outlet was not even necessary.[98] The editor of the *Peace*

Bennett, May 27, 1931. *Ibid.*, 380221, Bennett to Beaverlodge Conservative Association, September 14, 1931. PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, 377b, Wembley Board of Trade to Premier, July 27, 1931. PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 441, Box 328, file 5, 8153, Wembley Board of Trade to Tolmie, July 27, 1931. NAC, RG 30, vol. 13048, file 2205-9 part 1, C.C. Gerber (Peace River Board of Trade to Thornton, May 1, 1931. *Block News*, July 22, 1930, May 26, 1931, and June 16, 1931. *Record*, May 1, 1931, July, 31, 1931, and September 25, 1931. *Sun* May 19, 1931.

[95] NAC, Bennett Papers, 380280-3, Crysdale, Gzowski and Fairbairn to Manion, December 11, 1931. A copy is in NAC, RG 30, vol. 7327.

[96] Lyman Duff, *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Railways and Transportation in Canada, 1931-1932*, (Ottawa, 1932).

[97] *Journal* February 18, 1932. *Block News*, February 22, 1932. Popular historian Andrew Rimmington continues to blame the federal government's stalling tactics for the failure of the Peace to get an outlet railway. Rimmington, *Peace River Railway Surveys*, (1973), 8.

[98] *Journal* February 18, 1932.

River Block News, C.S. Kitchen, demanded residents of the region continue the campaign.

> We must recognize the fact that very powerful interests are opposing early construction so it is up to the people of the entire country, through their various organisations to petition the government and use every legitimate means to keep this matter to the fire and assist our members and show the whole country backs them up in their demands.[99]

The coast outlet railway issue continued to simmer in the region.

The House of Commons continued to debate the issue, the local newspapers periodically published stories supporting the project, and residents continued to lobby politicians for support.[100] The railway prospects appeared dim, however, until 1937. Agriculture showed remarkable improvements in the Peace River country, and in that year, E.W. Beatty, while touring the Peace River region stated:

> it will not be long now until financial condition will be such as to permit of this undertaking [coast outlet]. I cannot say that I agree ... that a coast outlet should be constructed to Prince Rupert. But I do say that your country here does need an outlet to the coast, and that it should be to an established port.[101]

Beatty concluded, however, that an outlet at present was not feasible and argued further development and settlement was necessary. Beatty's rejection of the outlet led to flurry of protests and renewed calls for the immediate construction of the outlet. As W.D. Albright noted, "The destiny of the Peace is closely linked with that of the Coast Province," and only an outlet could mature that connection.[102] By World War 2, consequently, the long fruitless campaign for an outlet left the Peace River settlers disillusioned and angry.

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[99] *Block News* March 22, 1932.

[100] House of Commons, *Debates*, 1932-3, 2360-65. *Ibid.*, 1934, 1030-49. PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 126, file 3, H.C. Hamelin to Pattullo, December 14, 1933. *Ibid.*, Dawson Creek Board of Trade to Pattullo, January 11, 1934. *Ibid.*, O.S. Floyd to Pattullo, February 17, 1934. *Ibid.*, Peace River District Liberal Association to Pattullo, April 4, 1934. *Ibid.*, Rolla Board of Trade to Pattullo, April 20, 1934. *Ibid.*, Box 244, file 10, George Murray to Pattullo, March 31, 1936. PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 265b, Resolution of Elmworth UFA, January 10, 1934. *Record*, October 13, 1933, January 4, 1934, March 9, 1934, and August 28, 1936. *Block News*, January 16, 1934, February 6, 1934, March 5, 1935, and May 8, 1936. *Herald*, January 4, 1934, January 11, 1934, November 20, 1935, February 20, 1936, and March 5, 1936.

[101] *Record*, September 24, 1937. The Edmonton newspapers claimed Beatty rejected outlet during tour. *Journal*, September 24, 1937. In a later interview, Beatty claimed an outlet would not be built until the population in the Peace region doubled. *Journal*, September 27, 1937.

The combination of the Depression, the 1932 railway report, and Beatty's statements led to a change of emphasis. Peace River residents now pressed for the construction of a coast outlet highway rather than a railway. The willingness of Peace River residents to accept a highway outlet until a railway could be provided indicates that the outlet had become a completely emotional rather than economic interest in the Peace River country. In competition with a railway, after all, a highway in 1932 provided limited economic value as a mode of transporting goods and almost no economic value for transporting wheat over such great distances. It was, however, a symbol of progress and modernity, and just as important, Peace River residents could not build a railway, but could possibly construct a road.

A coast outlet highway had been championed as early as 1925, but really came to the interest of Peace River residents in the late 1920s as B.C. explored opportunities to open both the Peace River country and the mineral wealth of the Finlay valley. Routes through Peace and Pine passes were considered, and construction of a road from the CNR Prince Rupert line towards the mineral fields at Manson Creek actually began.[103] The highway project, however, never attained the importance or prestige of the railway outlet until the Depression. High unemployment and the poor financial condition of the railway companies brought the highway outlet to the forefront.[104]

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[102] W.D. Albright, "Past, Present and Future of the Peace," 134. *Record*, February 5, 1937, February 26, 1937, September 17, 1937, February 3, 1938, April 29, 1939, May 5, 1939, and May 12, 1939. *Block News*, February 5, 1937, July 2, 1937, August 6, 1937, May 18, 1939. *Northern Tribune*, September 30, 1937.

[103] S.R. Smith, "The Peace River - Pacific Motorway," July 20, 1925 in NAC, CNR, vol. 3059. Smith sent a copy of his memo to the Prime Minister as well. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 145, 106696-8, S.R. Smith (Beaverlodge Liberal Association) to King, August 1, 1925. The activity led to lobbying by the Mr. McBride, M.P. for Cariboo. *Record*, September 3, 1925. Two routes, one from Vanderhoof to Fort St. John via Fort St. James and Peace Pass, the other from Prince George to Pouce Coupé, dominated the discussions. *Record*, October 6, 1927, October 27, 1927, March 22, 1929, March 29, 1929, August 9, 1929, and October 11, 1929, and November 29, 1929. *Herald*, June

A.M. Bezanson, the former townsite promoter, real estate speculator, and publicist published a lengthy article calling for the construction of a coast outlet highway in late 1931.[105] His article marked the beginning of a vicious clash between highway and railway proponents. Many feared that the governments might use the highway as an excuse for not building a railway.[106] The refusal of governments to support the highway project, and the willingness of the highway supporters to make personal sacrifice for their dreams slowly encouraged all Peace River residents to rally to the cause. The highways became a symbol of Peace River perseverance in the face of government intransigence.

In a pattern similar to the railway outlet, districts within the region championed alternative routes. One route became known as the Northern Alberta and British Columbia/Peace Pass Highway. This highway project came to the forefront in 1935. The heavy rains that year emphasised the isolation of the region and its dependence upon the single route to Edmonton. Floods and slides destroyed the NAR bridge across the Smoky River and washed out both the railway and road to Edmonton at Lesser Slave Lake.[107] During the federal election the B.C. Liberal candidate in Cariboo, J.G. Turgeon, made

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24, 1927 and March 16, 1928. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 130-31.

[104] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 441, Box 328, file 5, 8158, D. Lay (B.C. government engineer) to Robert Dunn (Deputy Minister of Mines), June 22, 1931. *Ibid.*, 8115, Beaverlodge Board of Trade to Bennett, December 11, 1933 (Copy to Pattullo). *Record*, August 1, 1930, August 8, 1930, and February 6, 1931. *Block News*, September 2, 1930, September 16, 1930, September 1, 1931 and June 28, 1932.

[105] *Block News*, November 3, 1931 and November 10, 1931. *Record*, November 20, 1931.

[106] *Record*, November 27, 1931 and June 16, 1933. *Block News*, November 24, 1931, January 12, 1932, February 23, 1932, April 5, 1932, May 3, 1932, June 14, 1932, July 26, 1932, August 9, 1932 and September 6, 1932.

[107] *Block News*, July 5, 1935.

the highway part of his election platform.[108] The Peace Pass route, consequently, became a promising alternative to transporting goods to Edmonton.

Residents north of the Peace River and in Dawson Creek became the primary supporters of the Peace Pass route. It proposed not only to access the coast, but to open up the mineral fields as a potential market and to connect the Alberta and B.C. districts on the north side of the River. The first demands for a Northern Alberta and B.C. Highway had emerged in the mid-1920s.[109] This proposed road from Hine's Creek to Fort St. John provided an access to the Rocky Mountains and Peace River Pass while avoiding the problems involved in crossing the Peace or the Smoky Rivers. They saw the Peace Pass highway as an opportunity to fulfill this earlier dream. The Peace Country settlers, however, quickly realised that Turgeon had far more concern for accessing the Omineca mineral fields than building to the Peace River country. Despite the rhetoric and the efforts of Glen Braden (MLA Peace River Block), the highway got no closer than Fort St. James.[110]

Residents in the Grande Prairie country and the Pouce Coupé area championed an alternative route. Formed in October 1936, the Monkman Pass Highway Association attempted to interest British Columbia, Alberta, and the Dominion in a route from Beaverlodge to Hansard near Prince George.[111] Like the proponents of the Peace Pass route, they received political support from numerous politicians, although none as connected as J.G. Turgeon. René Pelletier (M.P. Peace River), H.G. Perry (MLA Prince George), and Louis LeBourdais (MLA Quesnel) all offered assistance as did the Vancouver business community.[112] The two route proposals led to vicious confrontations between supporters and to an intensive lobbying campaign.[113]

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[108] *Block News*, September 20, 1935 and September 27, 1935. Turgeon did call for the outlet in the Commons. *Block News*, April 17, 1936.

[109] PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3513. This file contains several petitions for the road along this route throughout the 1920s and 1930s. *Record*, December 6, 1929.

[110] *Block News*, June 12, 1935, May 8, 1936, September 4, 1936, November 27, 1936, February 5, 1937, February 26, 1937, March 26, 1937, and July 2, 1937. *Record*, July 2, 1937. PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 144, file 3, Braden to Pattullo, Dec. 8, 1938. PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 265a, Memorandum to File, August 18, 1938, J.M. McArthur interview with C.S. Kitchen, Glenn Braden, and W.S. Bullen.

[111] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 144, file 3, "The Monkman Pass Highway Association," Project Sheet No. 2, 1938.

Unable to win government assistance for their project, the MPHA began to push a trail along the proposed route using volunteer labour and funds raised at dances and rallies in the Peace River country, Prince George, and Vancouver.[114] This action inspired residents in the North Peace, and in 1938, 1939 and 1940, they also used volunteer labour to clear brush along a trail between Rose Prairie and Hine's Creek along the Peace Pass route.[115] Their activity became part of the local identity. "Let it not be said that the Peace River settlers just sat back and expected the government to do everything for them," Magnus Gudlaugson later wrote. "They had waited for almost thirty years for the government to do something, to no avail so now they were going to do something themselves."[116] The *Record* concluded that the volunteers "put to shame the apathy of our governments both provincial and federal, who have left to the pioneers the almost insurmountable task of opening the road that has been promised."[117] A circular asked Vancouverites to support "the magnificent effort these splendid pioneers of the north are making in their own behalf."[118] Despite these glowing reports, the Peace River country remained no closer to connection with the Pacific coast.

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[112] *Record*, June 4, 1937 and February 17, 1938. *Block News*, February 24, 1938. *Journal*, May 3, 1938. *Sun*, April 23, 1938 and April 29, 1938. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 240, 206249-52, René Pelletier to Norman Rogers, March 19, 1937. PABC, Louis LeBourdais Collection, Add.MSS 676, vol. 9, file 9 contains numerous newspaper clippings from meetings the MPHA conducted throughout British Columbia.

[113] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 144, file 3. This file contains numerous letters demanding the Monkman Highway or Peace Pass Highway be constructed. See Irvin Groh to Pattullo, March 4, 1937 and Ben Miller to Pattullo, November 28, 1938 for examples of each side. The debate was conducted in letters in the *Block News*, April7, 1938, April 14, 1938, April 21, 1938, April 28, 1938, May 12, 1938, June 2, 1938, June 9, 1938, and June 23, 1938. At one point, the editor tried to curtail the debate to no effect. A letter to the editor of the *Prince George Citizen* by Page Rideout argued that the Monkman Pass Highway was simply another example of Grande Prairie attempting to dominate the Peace. PABC, LeBourdais Collection, vol. 10, file 2, Undated Clipping from *Citizen*.

[114] *Record*, February 17, 1938, March 3, 1938. *Sun*, April 23, 1938 and April 29, 1938. PABC, LeBourdais Collection, Add.MSS 676, vol. 9, file 9, Art "Hazard" Smith to LeBourdais, August 12, 1938.

[115] *Record*, March 31, April 21, and May 6 1938; January 13, January 27, February 3, and March 31, 1939; and February 9, 1940. *Northern Gazette*, January 13, 1939. *Fairview Post*, August 29, 1941 and March 20, 1942. The activity concerned the NAR. PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 265a, J.M. MacArthur to A.E. Warren (Chair of NAR Operating Committee), June 19, 1939. *Ibid.*, file 1244, E.D. Froom (NAR Agent Hine's Creek) to J.M. MacArthur, September 8, 1941. Froom pointed out that the road would be no more than a winter tractor road.

While an outlet to the Pacific became the principal symbol of progress in the region, Peace River boosters also had a northern dream. They were convinced that connection with the north, a connection they believed historically sound, would be a source of wealth for their region. The district had been opened by the northern fur trade, and the first settlers had entered the district in search of a route to Klondike Gold.[119] From Klondike Gold, to Fort Norman Oil, to Yellowknife Gold and Great Bear Lake Radium, Peace River believed the north was its rightful hinterland. Yet access to the north was not a certainty. The town of Peace River, the focus of this sentiment, found itself in a competition with Fort McMurray for northern traffic. Ind[illegible] it often seemed to be on the losing side of the competition.[120]

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[116] Gudlaugson, *Three Times a Pioneer*, 31.

[117] *Record*, October 21, 1938.

[118] PABC, LeBourdais Collection, Add.MSS 676, vol. 9, file 9, Circular from the Monkman Pass Highway Association of Vancouver.

[119] For an example of how Peace River referred back to the Klondike, see *Record*, February 19, 1932.

[120] *Record*, March 19, 1937. The editorial argued that the loss of northern freight route to Fort McMurray 20 years earlier had cost the Peace Country tremendous business. In the 1930s, another alternative route via Fort Nelson and the Laird River led to claims by Dawson Creek to the northern trade as well.

The attempt by the North Peace district and other communities in the region to gain access to the north, covered a wide spectrum of transportation initiatives. River boats, airplanes, roads, and railways were considered. The town of Peace River served briefly as the gateway to north during the 1916-21 period after arrival of the Central Canadian Railway, and before Alberta & Great Waterways reached Waterways on the Athabasca River.[121] The railway connected southern commercial interests with the Mackenzie river system, and the Crossing became an important trans-shipment point. Baron Rhondda made Peace River Crossing the home of his proposed northern empire, and the American corporation Lamson Hubbard used the town as its administrative centre for the northern fur trade. The *Record* described the community as the future metropolis of the north, and every advantage of the Peace River route over its Athabasca rival received front page coverage.[122]

This early northern transportation success focused on the Peace River and the great river boats which sailed in northern waters. At its peak, the community was the site of the construction of the *D.A. Thomas*, a steamer, the size of which is often exaggerated, but which nevertheless stood out as the largest river steamer in the North. It carried passengers, livestock, and other freight between Hudson's Hope and Vermilion Chutes.[123] The Peace proved difficult to navigate, however, and the *D.A. Thomas* often found itself grounded upon the shifting sand bars upstream of Fort St. John. Moreover, it soon became apparent that water transport on the Peace could not compete with the Athabasca because of the Vermilion Chutes. This fourteen-foot waterfall between Fort Vermilion and Lake Athabasca created an extra trans-shipment point, and, when the Alberta and Great Waterways reached the Athabasca River in 1922, Waterways and Fort McMurray became the primary northern debarkation point. The Peace River transportation route nearly disappeared in the 1930s following the futile effort to send the

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[121] Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 9.

[122] *Record*, January 26, 1917, May 7, 1920, and November 3, 1920.

[123] Evelyn Hansen, *Where Go the Boats: Navigation on the Peace, 1792-1952*, (Peace River: Peace River Centennial Museum, 1977).

D.A. Thomas across Vermilion Chutes for use on the Mackenzie River. Still, the community never really gave up entirely on the river and continued to boost the route. It claimed that the Peace was the shortest route to the Mackenzie River and was open up to six weeks longer than the Athabasca.[124] River boat traffic was maintained on the route to Fort Vermilion to supply that community and most importantly to get produce to market.

Although early efforts to access the north focused upon the river, Peace River residents also championed the new, modern system of air transportation. Imperial Oil's efforts to service its Norman Wells oilfield by air provided a hint of the future. Imperial's experiment, however, ended in failure as the primitive aircraft proved unable to cope with the strains of northern bush flights.[125] Although the airstrip's location in the valley at the town of Peace River made it dangerous, the community endeavoured to utilise the airstrip, and fought to make itself the northern air entrepôt. It was critical of Edmonton's claims in this regard, especially since Edmonton transportation companies seemed to prefer Fort McMurray as their mid-north base.[126]

By the mid-1930s, airplanes had become a common sight in the Peace Country. Grande Prairie and Fort St. John had developed airports and became refuelling stations for northern flights between Edmonton and Whitehorse by Grant McConachie's Yukon Southern Airways. At Peace River, Mackenzie Air Service (MAS) occasionally used the relocated airstrip at Peace River on the Mackenzie flights, and a local company, Peace River Airways (PRA), had been formed to compete with Edmonton interests. Meanwhile, Dawson Creek and Fairview made efforts to attract airplane traffic to their communities.[127] The region, however, was not entirely satisfied with air transportation.

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[124] *Record*, April 1, 1926 and March 25, 1932.

[125] *Record*, December 15, 1920.

[126] *Record*, April 5, 1929.

[127] *Record*, October 3, 1930, July 2, 1937, March 31, 1938, April 29, 1938, April 7, 1939. *Northern Tribune*, January 12, 1933, July 4, 1935, October 22, 1936, March 18, 1937, and May 25, 1939. *Block News*, July 24, 1934, October 9, 1936, March 12,

The consolidation of air service early in World War 2 forced PRA out of business and the *Record* wrote that the decision constituted another "blow to northern development." It represented another attempt to keep northern development from being linked with the Peace River.[128] Despite this setback, a string of airfields existed in the north prior to World War 2, and as air transportation became more important, these facilities would become increasingly useful.

Airplanes, nevertheless, remained a transportation mode of the future. Prior to World War 2, transportation meant railways and roads. The settlement boom in the Peace country, 1927-1929 inspired demands for a northern railway. Settlers flooded into the Battle River Prairie during this period, and this settlement island, 130 km north of Grimshaw, required access to markets. A British syndicate applied for a charter to build a railway from Peace River to the Mackenzie valley, and others floated ideas of a railway to Alaska.[129] This interest in a northern railway, just as the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific purchased the Alberta government railways and formed the Northern Alberta Railway Company, led to the inclusion of the Grimshaw branch line in the NAR charter.[130]

The demands for a railway north from Grimshaw intensified in the 1930s. The boosters believed that the north represented a new market for agricultural producers and urban merchants in the Peace region. Indeed, the *Record* ranked access to the north ahead of the long demanded coast outlet in the needs of the North Peace. More

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1937, June 25, 1937, September 10, 1937, January 21, 1938, and March 24, 1938. Isabel Campbell, *Grande Prairie*, 109-116. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie," 220-30. Richard Finnie, *Canada Moves North*, 100-10.

[128] *Record*, January 6, 1940.

[129] *Record*, March 16, 1928, March 23, 1928, and August 10, 1928. *Journal*, March 14, 1928 and March 17, 1928. PAA, Alta. Railways, Acc. 84.388, file 1100.103.3, V.W. Smith to D.M. Kennedy, March 20, 1928. GMA, Kennedy Papers, M622, file 1, Kennedy to Winston Churchill, March 29, 1928. NAC, CNR, vol. 3060, Ernest Blue to John Callaghan, April 16, 1927 (Copy to Thornton).

[130] NAC, CNR, vol. 7327, A.E. Warren to Hungerford, October 28, 1929.

importantly, the boosters began to link the highway with the long desired coast outlet.[131] During his September 1937 visit to the Peace Country, CPR President E.W. Beatty informed the local community that a coast outlet would be viable only if the Peace Country increased its agricultural output and opened up new resources in the north. Hence he emphasised new settlement in the north and hinted that the NAR would build the Grimshaw branch line north as part of any coast outlet project.[132] The positive response in Peace River produced a flurry of activity at the NAR offices. Although the NAR charter called for the future construction of the Grimshaw line, the railway had not made any surveys of the region and was not prepared for Beatty's statement. The NAR, thus, allowed the issue to die.[133] Amongst Peace River boosters, Beatty's claim that Peace River needed to be the focal point of northern development indicated that wheat alone would not justify a coast outlet.[134]

The railway would be another project for the future, and the region's best hopes for accessing a northern hinterland rested on the construction of a northern road. Fur traders, hunters, prospectors, and a few adventurous farmers had carved out northern trails between the Crossing and Fort Vermilion in Alberta, and Rolla and Fort Nelson in

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[131] Jim Cornwall first made this link in 1930. *Journal*, February 22, 1930 and December 21, 1933. *Record*, September 2, 1932, and November 20, 1936.

[132] *Journal*, September 24, 1937 and May 13, 1938. *Record*, September 24, 1937 and October 1, 1937.

[133] PAA, Northern Alberta Railway Papers (NAR), Acc. 86.587, file 265b, Devlin to A.E. Warren, October 15, 1937; J.M. MacArthur to H.W. Tye. October 23, 1937; James McCaig to MacArthur, December 9, 1937; and William Neal to MacArthur, June 3, 1938. In reality the Northern Alberta Railway company had no incentive to build north from Grimshaw since the Grimshaw shipping point already trapped the traffic from that region. *Ibid.*, file 265a, MacArthur to W.A. Mather, June 1, 1944. *Record*, September 16, 1938.

[134] *Record*, July 16, 1937 and October 22, 1937.

B.C..[135] The settlement pressure in Battle River led to demands that the Fort Vermilion trail be upgraded into a road. Provincial politicians were lobbied by all northern residents for highway access and marketing roads into the region, and a road was extended 130 km north from Grimshaw to access the Battle River district.[136] To the surprise of the government, rather than reduce the pressure from Peace River for a road north, the Grimshaw road generated more pressure for extensions to Keg River and Fort Vermilion.[137] The Peace River region soon claimed that northern roads would also access the mineral wealth of the Mackenzie district. The discovery of uranium and radium at Great Bear Lake in 1931 inspired a number of new attempts by the residents of the North Peace district and the Peace River Block to interest the provincial governments in their respective northern roads.[138]

Pressure for a road had mounted by 1936, and the newly elected Social Credit government was lobbied by several northern interests. Building a road in the north, however, was expensive and posed special engineering and maintenance problems and thus the province refused to make more than vague commitments to the project.[139] But when a Dominion program to fund roads to mining areas made northern road building appear profitable to the Alberta government, the Minister of Public Works, W.A. Fallow began to search for possible projects. "Peace River Jim" Cornwall, the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, and the Fort McMurray's Liberal Association lobbied for the Fort McMurray route. "The Athabasca route," wrote Jim Duchak, "is the one and only logical geographical route into the Northern Mining Areas."[140] Alberta supported this option during this early period, and the *Record* complained that the Province refused to consider northern transportation from Peace River.[141] The Fort McMurray route supporters, however, seemed more interested in improving the water route than building a road. Fallow's proposals for the Fort McMurray route, consequently, called for portage roads to bypass low water points along the Athabasca River. Since this project did not qualify under the Dominion roads to mines scheme, the Mines Branch rejected the Alberta proposals along the Fort McMurray route in October 1936.[142]

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[135] A petition in 1907 marked the first demand for a road north to Fort Vermilion. PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3521. Citizens of Fort Vermilion to Minister of Public Works, August 8, 1907. Until 1926, traders and outfitters travelled on a trail from Spirit River through Rolla and on to Fort Nelson and the Laird River. M.E. Coutts, *Dawson Creek*, 34. E.A. Keith, "Early Transportation in the Peace River Country," *Northwest Digest* 10 (May-June, 1954), 23. Zaslow remarked that bulk goods used the Athabasca route, dignitaries the Peace River route, and surveyors the Fort Nelson route. Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada*, 25.

[136] PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, Item 62, Grimshaw UFA to Allen, March 6, 1928. *Record*, March 8, 1929.

[137] PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3520, Petition of Keg River, December 3, 1930; and *ibid.*, file 3521, William Letto (Fort Vermilion) to W.H. Bailey (MLA), March 1932.

[138] PAA, Highways, 67.303, file 3521. GMA, Kennedy Papers, M622, file 1, E.E. Taylor to D.M. Kennedy MP, March 4, 1932, and file 7, Peace River Board of Trade Pamphlet, Undated (1932?). *Record*, May 24, 1929, March 25, 1932, April 1, 1932, April 8, 1932, December 2, 1932, December 9, 1932, and December 16, 1932. *Block News*, May 26, 1931, January 12, 1932, and March 20, 1936.

About this time, Peace River and its route north from Grimshaw attracted some powerful advocates. In 1937 and 1938 Yellowknife businessmen and Edmonton mining interests joined the community of Peace River in lobbying for improved access to the north via a road from Grimshaw.[143] Problems on the waterways route in 1936-8 had produced supply shortages in Yellowknife.[144] The district now had vocal support through the *Nor'West Miner*, an Edmonton based monthly. The *Miner* publisher, F.S. Wright, argued for the Grimshaw route in a series of articles beginning in November 1936. Most important, he challenged the idea of building a road via Fort McMurray. "Any northerner knows how ridiculous such a suggestion is," wrote Wright, "considering the fact that it is perfectly possible to open up a highway from Peace River Crossing to Great Slave Lake, with a branch if necessary down the Peace River to Fort Chipewyan and Goldfields."[145] The combined pressure was enough to get Fallow to look into the matter for the first time. Faced with opposition in Ottawa to his proposals for the McMurray route, on September 15, 1937 Fallow committed the Alberta government to press the Dominion for a winter road between Grimshaw and Yellowknife.[146]

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[139] *Record*, September 17, 1937; and PAA, Highways, 67.303, file 3520, J.H. Johnson to G.H.N. Monkman (Deputy Min.), Oct. 2, 1937.

[140] PAA, NAR, Acc. 86.587, file 46b, J.K. Cornwall to J.M. MacArthur December 8, 1937; and Copy of Memo Cornwall to Aberhart, November 30, 1937. NAC, Mines, RG 86, vol. 19, file VII.83, John Duchak (Fort McMurray) to T.A. Crerar, February 4, 1939. NAC, Railways, RG 43, vol. 556, file 17773A part 1, John Blue (Edmonton) to J.A. Mackinnon, April 30, 1936.

[141] *Record*, February 12, 1937, March 19, 1937, and May 6, 1938.

[142] NAC, Mines, RG 86, Vol. 18, file VII.81, Camsell to Fallow, October 21, 1936; and "Precis: McMurray-Athabasca River Road," October 28, 1936.

[143] *Record*, June 5, 1936, and March 5, 1937.

Alberta could not afford to build a good highway from Edmonton to Peace River let alone north to Hay River or Fort Vermilion and needed the financial support of the Dominion.[147] As a result, the Peace River boosters' aspirations remained unfulfilled despite the route's new advocates, and the community of Peace River became increasingly impatient.[148] Fallow, nevertheless, remained committed to a northern road. He told Social Credit officials "that tremendous benefits can accrue to the Province of Alberta in the opening up of the vast, unexplored territory that lies to the north of us, and to that end, we are hoping that arrangements will be satisfactorily completed whereby a good road may be built to form part of an arterial route to the Far North."[149] The problems with Peace River's dreams now existed in Ottawa at the Mines Branch and in the office of Charles Camsell.

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[144] H.W. Hewetson, "Transportation in the North-West," C.A. Dawson ed., *The New North-West*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), 210.

[145] *Nor'West Miner*, November 1936, July 1937, February 1938 and May-June 1942.

[146] PAA, Highways, Acc. 67.303, file 3521, Fallow to Keith December, 1936; and *Record*, September 17, 1937.

[147] NAC, Mines Branch, RG 86, v. 18, file VII.82, Fallow to Crerar, October 12, 1937. *Nor'West Miner*, February 1938. *Journal*, December 19, 1938 and December 29, 1938. *Bulletin*, March 23, 1939.

[148] *Record*, September 17, 1937, March 17, 1938, May 6, 1938, June 10, 1938, and December 30, 1938. The *Record* and others incorrectly assumed the Alberta government was responsible for the delays. *Record*, May 15, 1938. NAC, Mines Branch, RG 86, v. 19, f. VII.83, Notikewin Liberal Association to C.D. Howe, August 1938.

Camsell and his officials believed Alberta's claims about the costs and benefits of a northern road were exaggerated. The Alberta Government, the Peace River boosters and F.S. Wright all claimed the road could be built for $80,000. Mines Branch official, W.H. Norrish, wrote that such a figure was outrageous, and estimated the cost at $266,000.[150] Claims by F.S. Wright that freight could be hauled on a winter road for $12 per ton or three and one-half cents per ton-mile were ridiculed by Norrish.[151] When Fallow and Wright complained that the Branch figures were wrong and that the road would reduce shipping costs to the north, Camsell replied that his Department would not be "bullied."[152] After consultation with the northern transportation companies, both Norrish and Camsell concluded that no road project could produce a beneficial impact on the costs of northern transportation.

One year later, the mood changed when relief workers were used to survey some of the Grimshaw route, and brush out (clear the trees but do no other work) a primitive trail along the telegraph right of way between Notikewin and Keg River. "Let's Hope There's Fire from all the Smoke," the editorial in the 6 January 1939 *Record* began, and

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[149] PAA, Fallow Papers, Acc. 68.307, Box 72, file 2, W.A. Fallow to G.L. MacLachlan, January 6, 1939.

[150] NAC, Mines Branch, RG 86, vol. 18, file VII.82, Memorandum: Grimshaw Road, October 19, 1937.

[151] *Nor'West Miner*, December 1937. NAC, Mines Branch, RG 86, v. 18, f. VII.82, Memo to file by W.H. Norrish, December 23, 1937. Norrish pointed out that other winter roads cost fifteen cents per ton mile to operate.

[152] NAC, Mine's Branch, RG 86, v. 18, f. VII.82, Fallow to Crerar, November 24, 1937, Wright to Camsell, November 12, 1937, and Camsell to Wright, November 30, 1937.

Peace River would get its rightful access to the North.[153] Under the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement between Alberta and the Dominion government on 2 February 1939, the two governments agreed to contribute $35,000 each to a winter road between Grimshaw and Hay River.[154] Two factors influenced the Dominion government's changed position. First, the increasing importance of Eldorado radium made an emergency access for the ore essential.[155] Second, the approach of war increased interest in gold development, and private contractors began to see the merits of a road to the north. The Dominion, however, continued to fear a permanent and expensive commitment along the route. Indeed, Camsell's resistance to the Grimshaw route can be traced to this major objection. They informed Alberta that the road work should be limited "to the minimum required for winter travel in order that funds may go as far as possible." Both governments, nevertheless, understood that the project had future ramifications.[156]

In March 1939 the first of a series of winter tractor trains pushed northward along the route.[157] The tractor train experienced tremendous difficulty on the route as stumps were too tall in areas, and hills too steep. The train had to follow the brush cutter itself after reaching Upper Hay River Post. Still, the Yellowknife Tractor Company informed the Dominion: "... we are still quite optimistic as to the possibility of the route. We believe if the road were completed to Yellowknife over the proposed route that it would no doubt be of great benefit in the near future."[158] Although the capital requirements of a permanent road still seemed unattainable, the Grimshaw route was now the preferred avenue for a highway. Nevertheless, until a permanent road was constructed, Fort McMurray and the Athabasca River remained the route of choice for northern access.

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[153] *Record*, January 6, January 13, and January 27, 1939.

[154] NAC, Mine's Branch, RG 86, v. 19, f. VII.83, C.W. Jackson to G.H.N. Monkman, January 24, 1939 and Memorandum of Agreement, February 2, 1939.

[155] NAC, Mine's Branch, RG 86, v. 26, Memorandum by H.M. Rowe, November 10, 1939.

[156] NAC, Mines Branch, RG 86, vol. 19, file VII.83, C.W. Jackson to G.H.N. Monkman, January 24, 1939.

[157] *Record*, March 10, 1939.

The Peace River region hoped the Alaska Highway would finally mean the realisation of their transportation dreams. A Highway to Alaska had been proposed by B.C. as early as 1929,[159] but it only became a topic of significance in the Peace following the appointment of the Alaska Highway Commission in 1938. The Commission's mandate was limited to examining a route along the coast to the Alaska panhandle and across the mountains into the Yukon River valley (Route A), and one in the B.C. interior from Fort George up the Rocky Mountain Trench through Sifton Pass and across the mountains into the Yukon (Route B). Although the Peace River Block placed its hopes on Route B and the possibility of constructing a highway connection to the Alaskan route via Peace Pass, the Alberta government and the North Peace district promoted an alternative prairie route from Edmonton to Grimshaw, then north to Norman Wells and west through the Mackenzie Mountains to the Yukon territory and Fairbanks (Route D).[160] The Peace River Board of Trade actively publicised the Grimshaw road, and its president joined the executive of the newly formed U.S.-Canada-Alaska Prairie

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[158] NAC, Mine's Branch, RG 86, v. 19, f. VII.83, A.S. Hodgson (Yellowknife Tractor Company) to R.A. Gibson (Deputy Commissioner of the North West Territories), April 10, 1939 and Ibid., C.J. Leonard, "Cat Train Makes Successful Trip," May 5, 1939.

[159] Robin Fisher, "T.D. Pattullo and the Alaska Highway ", *The Alaska Highway: Papers of the Fortieth Anniversary Symposium*, Ken Coates, ed., (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985): 9-35, and S.D. Grant, *Sovereignty and Security*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 42-3.

[160] House of Commons, *Sessional Papers, 1940-41-42*, Sessional Paper 137a, Preliminary Report of the Alaska Highway Commission. *Record*, Feb. 17, 1939, and August 18, 1939. NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 283, 238964-6, Aberhart to King, October 10, 1940.

Highway Association. The *Record* gleefully published every favourable report.[161]

The community soon drew inspiration from the activities of W.A. Fallow and Vilhalmur Stefansson.[162] Stefansson and Fallow began their campaign for the Alberta route independently, but soon agreed to assist each other. Fallow fed Stefansson information about the Alberta sections of Route D, and together they spread the merits of the route, emphasising the mineral wealth it would open, and the already existing tractor road.[163] Fallow spearheaded the Alberta campaign. He continued to lobby the Mine's Branch for improvements on the winter road including grading, bridging, and ditching. To Camsell, these proposals suggested that Alberta desired more than a winter road.[164] Indeed, Fallow argued that a standard 20 foot earth grade road to Alaska could be built along the route for only $1.5 million.[165] The *Nor'West Miner* also lobbied for Route D, and other groups now joined the campaign including the United Farmers of Alberta. This support allowed the community of Peace River to declare that it was in the national as much as the local interest to develop the Grimshaw Highway.[166]

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[161] PAA, Fallow Papers, Acc. 68.307, Box 72, file 3, H.E. Jerry (Peace River Board of Trade) to Fallow, May 13, 1941. *Ibid.*, Report of the U.S.-Canada-Alaska Highway Association, May 22, 1941. *Record*, December 13, 1940, December 20, 1940, and April 25, 1941.

[162] The first indication of a campaign to use the Grimshaw road as part of the Alaska Highway found in W.A. Fallow's files is PAA, Fallow Papers, Acc. 68.307, Box 87, file 6, J.K. Cornwall to Fallow, December 29, 1938. Stefansson began acting in concert with Fallow after he heard Fallow speak on the matter in the U.S.. *Ibid.*, Box 72 file 2 several notations, and file 3, Stefansson to Fallow, May 23, 1940. Fallow had lobbied for the Grimshaw route in Washington for the first time during November 1939. *Ibid.*, Box 87, file 5, Fallow to Stefansson, April 6, 1945.

[163] PAA, Fallow Papers, Box 72, file 2, Fallow to Stefansson, July 16, 1940; Fallow to Stefansson, September 27, 1940; Stefansson to Fallow, October 14, 1940; and Fallow to Stefansson March 17, 1941. NAC, Richard Finnie Papers, vol. 7, file 9, Stefansson to Finnie, November 28, 1941 and Stefansson to Fallow, January 11, 1942.

[164] NAC, Mine's Branch, RG86, vol. 19, f. VII.85, Fallow to Crerar, April 6, 1939; Monkman to Camsell, December 28, 1939; and Camsell to Monkman, January 15, 1940.

[165] PAA, Fallow Papers, Box 72, file 2, W.A. Fallow to Ernest Gruening (Governor of Alaska), Dec. 15, 1939; Fallow to Gruening, September 28, 1940; and Fallow to King, October 10, 1940.

Fallow, Stefansson, and the Peace River boosters failed to convince the Americans that Route D should be chosen. Fallow's limited influence existed only in Canada, and even within the Mine's Branch, it had taken several years to convince officials to spend even minor amounts on the road north from Grimshaw. Stefansson's influence in American circles, despite his claims, was almost non-existent. Richard Finnie, his Canadian agent, received better consideration than Stefansson. Finnie reported that the Americans had made up their minds in favour of a route following the North-West Staging Route of airfields (Route C) before they met with Canadian officials. Since Canada considered the road to Alaska a low priority, they would not interfere with the American route selection. The Alaska road, consequently, did not fulfill the dreams of the North Peace community.[167]

The selection of Route C, the Fort St. John to Fort Nelson to Whitehorse route, proved to be a boon to the Peace River Block. "Dawson Creek will be the most important town on a proposed military highway from the U.S. to Alaska," chimed the *Peace River Block News* as rumours about the road emerged.[168] The projected route from Chicago to Alaska via Edmonton and the Peace River country would utilise Dawson Creek, the end-of-steel, as the "base of supplies brought in by rail and transshipped by truck." The newspaper noted the announcement of the highway meant "the Peace River Block has broken into worldwide importance," and local businesses were gearing up for the onslaught of American construction workers.[169] The district reacted harshly to suggestions from B.C. that Route B would be a better choice than the so-called "Muskeg Route." "We've stood a lot of hard knocks through the long years," the editor remarked, "and now when we are on the threshold [sic] of happier and prosperous days in store, someone has to come along and throw cold water on our good fortune."[170]

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[166] NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 276, 233750-1, Norman Priestly to King, January 3, 1939. *Ibid.*, vol. 304, 257649, Robert Gardiner to King, January 28, 1941. *Nor'West Miner*, March 1941 and February 1942. *Record*, April 25, 1941.

[167] NAC, Richard Finnie Papers, MG 31 C6, vol. 7, f. 9, Finnie to Stefansson, February 17, 1942 and February 19, 1942. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, f. 10, Stefansson to Frederic Delano, April 8, 1942; Diamond Jenness to Finnie, April 15, 1942; and Finnie to Stefansson April 11, 1942.

[168] *Block News*, February 26, 1942.

[169] *Block News*, March 5, 1942.

If Route C was a boon to the Block, however, it was a serious setback to Alberta and to the town of Peace River. The roads between Edmonton and Fort St. John were in poor condition. Furthermore, travel between Edmonton, Peace River and Fort St. John required use of a ferry crossing at either Dunvegan or the Little Smoky River as well as Taylor's Flats. It appeared that the town and the province would not get the Americans to build their desired northern access highway. Efforts by Alberta to get the Dominion or the private sector to spend money on improvements to the Grimshaw to Great Slave Lake winter road had failed dramatically.[171] Moreover, the improved financial arrangements between Canada and the United States had reduced the demand for gold by 1942, and despite a few tractor trains travelling north from Grimshaw each year, it appeared that Peace River would lose its opportunity to open the north of the province and the Yellowknife mineral fields.[172] The mood in the North Peace approached desperation if the tone of their letters is any indication. They never gave up hope, however, that the war projects would bring them some benefit.

The North Peace district sought to draw the northern Alberta and British Columbia Highway into the Alaska Highway project. The boosters had failed to make any real headway on the project, because it required co-operation from B.C. to complete. B.C. had little interest in assisting Edmonton to reap the benefits of a road from which the province was isolated by the Rocky Mountains.[173] The boosters now insisted the road had become a national security issue since it provided access to the Alaska Highway (note that the only bridge across the Peace in 1942 existed at the town of Peace River). Even more important, they argued, the only logical rail link to Fort St. John existed along the NABC highway route. But neither the Northern Alberta Railways nor the federal government responded to their appeals.[174] Indeed, despite a continued campaign from 1942 to 1944, construction of a road or railway along the route never occurred during the period.[175]

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[170] *Block News*, April 9, 1942.

[171] NAC, Mine's Branch, RG 86, v. 19, f. VII.85, Fallow to Crerar, April 6, 1939, Monkman to Camsell, January 10, 1940, Camsell to Monkman, January 15, 1940, and Fallow to Crerar, January 16, 1940. *Ibid.*, v. 26, Memorandum re: Franchise on Great Slave Lake Road, November 10, 1939.

[172] Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada*, p. 206. Zaslow points out that most of the northern gold mines closed in 1942 and 1943. Only a couple of tractor trains left Peace River in 1940 and 1941. *Record*, February 16, 1940, and January 17, 1941.

It was in this depressed state that the North Peace region learned of the Canol project. At first, it appeared that this project would also bypass Peace River. The first choice of the American military was to use the Athabasca River route into the north. But the *Nor'West Miner*, the Alberta government, and the town of Peace River maintained a campaign for the Grimshaw Road as the best route.[176] It was the environment, however, and specifically shipping difficulties on Great Slave Lake and the short three month navigation season, which led the Americans to consider alternative routes. When they failed to get all of the necessary supplies into the Mackenzie country in the summer of 1942, Fallow convinced them to use the winter road from Grimshaw and asked the

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[173] For example of these letters see, PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 165, file 2. B.C. politicians insisted they supported the route in public. *Block News*, January 11, 1940 and March 5, 1942.

[174] NAC, Transportation, RG 12, vol. 1994, file 3556-91.v.3, T.W. Hargreaves (Fort St. John) to Minister of Defence, April 23, 1941 and George Yates (Railways) to Hargreaves, May 7, 1941. NAC, Railways, RG 43, vol. 589, 18736, M.A. Metcalf (CNR) to George Yates, January 7, 1941. PAA, NAR Papers, Acc. 86.587, file 272, J.M. MacArthur to Hargreaves, April 25, 1941.

[175] *Record*, March 6, 1942, March 13, 1942, June 11, 1943, and June 25, 1943. PAA, Fallow Papers, Acc. 68.307, Box 72, file 4, Page Rideout to Fallow, July 26, 1943; and Fallow to Rideout, August 4, 1943. *Ibid.*, Box 71, file 4, Page Rideout to Fallow, December 27, 1944; Fallow to Herbert Anscomb (Minister of Public Works, B.C.), December 29, 1943; Anscomb to Fallow, January 3, 1944; and Fallow to Rideout, January 6, 1944.

[176] *Nor'West Miner*, May-June 1942.

Provincial government district engineer to assist them.[177] Thus in the winter of 1942-3, the U.S. military brushed out and improved a road along the old tractor train trail. The response from the boosters in Peace River area was positive, indeed almost gleeful. On the heels of the Alaska Highway decision, it appeared that the desired northern access was at hand. The so-called Canol road proposal fulfilled the long term desires of the district.

The first indications in the town of Peace River that the Americans were considering a road came in September 1942 as reconnaissance work began, and by October 9 a camp without any Canadian government liaison was established at Peace River.[178] By February of 1943, the editor of the *Record* could claim that the road was complete. In reality, however, the Canol road never met the expectations. The Alberta Government district engineer reported that the Americans primarily followed the Alberta survey lines, and made no attempt to improve the road. They simply pushed a winter road on the path of least resistance.[179] Little valuable traffic ever crossed into the north over the route, and it was abandoned in the spring of 1943. Use of the road during the winter of 1943-4 was restricted by poor conditions and lack of maintenance hence the local merchants of Peace River were left disheartened.[180] Still, the transformation of northern transportation had been made, and Richard Finnie was able to claim success.[181]

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[177] PAA, Fallow Papers, Box 87, file 5, Notes prepared by Richard Finnie following a meeting with Fallow October 5, 1942; Box 72 file 4, Fallow to Richard Halley (Counsel on Truman Senate Committee), November, 23, 1943; Box 87, file 6, Fallow to J.H. Johnson, September 10, 1942. This position contradicts the arguments found in Pat Barry, *The Canol Project: An Adventure of the US War Department in Canada's Northwest*, (Edmonton: P.S. Barry, 1985), 80-85. Barry argued that the Canol road was part of a U.S. plan to take over the north.

[178] *Record*, September 25, 1942 and October 9, 1942. NAC, WLMK Papers, v. 335, 287400, J.H. Sissons to King, October 27, 1942.

[179] PAA, Fallow Papers, Box 67, file 4, J.H. Johnson to E.D. Robertson, December 17, 1942.

[180] *Ibid.*, Box 88, file 2, Grimshaw Chamber of Commerce to Fallow, February 15, 1944.

Together the Alaska Highway and the Canol project set the stage for the fulfilment of the Peace River region's long standing transportation objectives (Map 25). Still smarting from the selection of Route C, B.C. Premier John Hart announced the construction of the John Hart Highway between Prince George and Dawson Creek through Pine Pass. Although Hart claimed in public that the highway would be built to service the Peace Country, it was clearly an effort to connect B.C. with the Alaska Highway.[182] In Alberta, Aberhart pressed the federal government for assistance in upgrading the roads between Edmonton and Dawson Creek, and despite the federal refusal, eventually constructed the Whitecourt cut-off and gravelled the Peace River trunk road system.[183] On the route north from Grimshaw, the residents of the North Peace pressed for the continuance of improvements and both the federal and provincial governments acted on their demands in 1945.[184] Probably more important than the Canol road, however, was the post-war explosion of mining activity at Yellowknife.[185] By November 1945, an agreement had been produced, and the Mackenzie highway, a standard 22 foot gravelled road was completed in December 1947.[186]

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[181] *Ibid.*, Box 88, file 2, Finnie to Fallow, December 16, 1944.

[182] PABC, Premier's Papers, GR 1222, Box 55, file 3 and Box 160, file 5 are especially good on this topic. Also see NAC, WLMK Papers, vol. 341, 293064, Hart to King, December, 10, 1943.

[183] Record, June 5, 1942, January 22, 1943, and February 26, 1943. See the articles by Bob Hesketh and Robert Irwin in *Three War Project: The Northwest Staging Route, The Alaska Highway and The Canol Project* (forthcoming)

[184] *Ibid.*, Box 87, file 2, Brief of the North Peace Associated Chambers of Commerce, November 22, 1943, and Box 88, file 2, N.E. Tanner to Fallow, January 5, 1945. The federal position is found in North Pacific Planning Project, *Canada's New Northwest*, (Ottawa, 1947), 11-12.

[185] NAC, Department of Northern Affairs, RG 85, vol. 1167, f. 350-1, Camsell to C.P. Edwards (Deputy Minister of Transport), October 2, 1943; and NAC, Charles Camsell Papers, MG 30 B38, vol. 2, W.F. Lothina to Charles Camsell, November 13, 1946.

By the end of World War 2, consequently, the embryo of the Peace River region's modern transportation system had been developed. A railway and highway existed to Edmonton, although few in the Peace River region expressed complete satisfaction with the condition or route of these projects. Moreover, highway connections with the west and the north had been established. The long campaign to fulfill the transportation objectives of the region, however, had left scars in the regional identity. Peace River settlers strove to create these transportation links, less for the perceived economic advantages they would provide, than for the perceptual benefits they held. The fulfilment of their goals, the symbolic achievement of modernity and civility, had waited for the Americans. Pierre Gauvreau summarised the attitudes of many Peace River settlers in a letter to John Hart. "[I]t is certainly in my estimation at least, one of the black blots on Canadian history ... that the only real development handed out to the hardy pioneers fighting for existence, would have to come from a foreign power."[187] This anger and resentment would also become an important element of the emerging regional identity. Peace River residents would express both their discontent and their optimism for the future in regional protest and a political autonomy movement.

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[186] PAA, Fallow Papers, Box 88, File 2 "Grimshaw Road", Memorandum of Agreement between Dominion of Canada and the Province of Alberta, 1945. *Construction World*, November 1948, p. 19-23 in PAA, Northern Alberta Railway Papers, Acc. 86.587, file 46a. The highway was not completed without difficulty. Alberta found itself desperately short of Highway construction equipment and looked into buying the U.S. Canol equipment left in the north. PAA, Fallow Papers, Box 82, File 2, Fallow to Thomas Macdonald (U.S. Commissioner of Public Works), January 29, 1947.

[187] PAA, Pierre Gauvreau Papers, Acc. 66.135, F30, Gauvreau to Premier John Hart, August 17, 1943. PABC, Premier's Papers, Peace River District, GR 1222, Box 165, File 2, Gauvreau to Hart, August 17 and 24, 1943.

Chapter 8

Regionalism and Regional Identity: Metropolitanism, Imagery, and Environment

Unjigah was a metaphor for the regional identity. Its strength and enduring nature embodied the Empire image. It disavowed political boundaries linking the entire drainage system into a single unit. The Peace River Country boosters displayed a similar ambivalence towards existing political boundaries. The November 25, 1927 headlines of the *Peace River Record* and the *Grande Prairie Herald* proclaimed "Let the Province of Peace River Look After Its Own Development." The story they announced called for the creation of a new northern province cut from the northern regions of Alberta and British Columbia. This political disenchantment was not an isolated incident. The theme of an autonomous northern government jurisdiction reappeared in 1932, 1935, 1936 and 1938. Similarly, in 1935 the Peace River Block considered joining the Province of Alberta. Although public meetings to discuss the schemes were held throughout the Peace country and in northern B.C., the Dominion never acted upon any of the proposals for changes in political jurisdiction, and they never made it past the hypothetical stage. The regional grievances the proposals represented were, nonetheless, an integral part of the Peace River regional identity.

Regional historians in Canada have demonstrated a tendency to concentrate on similar expressions of regional angst. Working in either a metropolitan or "limited identities concept," they have attempted to reconcile regional and national interests. Each of the writers in *Canada and the Burden of Unity*, for example, start with regionalism and then seek to discover the regional identity which could explain this sense of alienation.[1] As a result, regional identity is expressed as a hinterland response to metropolitan control. These historians thus seek to understand the region's place within the greater national or provincial identity. They discover regional identity in the political economy of the Canadian nation state.[2] In the case of the Peace River region, Morris Zaslow's outstanding efforts symbolise this orientation.[3] The association of the region with the greater political and economic community, however, is only one part of the regional layer of identity in the Peace River Country.

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[1] David Bercuson, ed., *Canada and the Burden of Unity*, (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1978).

In *Promise of Eden*, Doug Owram provides an alternative expression of regional identity, but it too reflects an emphasis upon regionalism and the region's place in the greater national identity. Beginning with the creation of a regional image and assessing the failure of the region to sustain this portrait, Owram suggests that the Hudson Bay Rail Road became a symbol of Manitoba's discontent and disillusionment. Constructing this rail road, boosters noted, would ensure the rapid development of the region and fulfilment of the expansionist dreams. The eastern Canadian apathy towards this issue fuelled the regional alienation and led to a re-orientation of the regional identity. The new identity, fostered in the regional landscape, replaced the expansionist vision of the 1870s. According to Owram, Manitobans emphasised the Red River settlement and the on-going struggle to develop the land, but, at the same time, cultivated an image of themselves as the true embodiment of the Canadian spirit.[4] Owram's examination of the new identity, therefore, reflects the continued emphasis on the region's place within the national sphere.

The concept of boosterism may also be used to help explain regionalism.

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[2] Some writers blame the Canadian political system for Canadian regionalism. See Richard Simeon and David Elkins, "Regional Political Cultures in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* VII no. 3 (1974), 397-437. Others blame the metropolitan economic system. See Fowke, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy*. Still others blame the entire metropolitan political economic system. See Roger Gibbons, *Prairie Politics and Society: Regionalism in Decline*, (Toronto: Butterworths, 1980); and Brodie, *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism*. The emphasis on regionalism in Canadian history led Ramsay Cook to reject his "limited identities" conception. "Regionalism Unmasked," *Acadiensis* XIII (Autumn 1983), 137-42.

[3] For a summary of this work, see Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North*, Chapter 4; and *idem*, *The Northward Expansion of Canada*, Chapter 2.

[4] Owram, *Promise of Eden*, 180-91, and 206-216.

Boosterism is a philosophy often used to determine historical patterns in urban settings. Its foremost student in Canada is Alan Artibise.[5] Artibise describes boosterism as a philosophy which at its heart has the concept of growth. Boosterism, and the boosters themselves, linked the idea of better with the term bigger. These prairie urban elites built a sense of community spirit which bridged the economic and social gaps within their cities. They promoted the notion that all classes and groups were united on the basis of faith in the city, belief in its destiny, and commitment to its growth. This community spirit thus found itself based more on myth than on reality.[6] The promotion of various cities by their boosters led to inter-urban competition, resentment, and regionalism.

All of these conceptions of regionalism are useful to understanding the Peace River regional identity. The failure of the metropolis and its agents to provide an effective transportation system certainly explained the plea for political autonomy. Similarly, the unrealistic image of the Peace River region created by the metropolitan promoters led to anger and disillusionment in the settlement community. And finally, the promotion of growth and self-interest by urban boosters led to resentment of the Edmonton and Vancouver business communities. But the identity is more. Historians must also consider the local characteristics identified in the preceding chapters and in Carl Dawson's study of the Peace Country.[7] The regional identity was created in the interaction between the settlement community and the landscape within the commercial, capitalist economic system. The autonomy movement was not only an expression of regional angst, but also a symbolic gesture of self-confidence and self-awareness. Peace River regionalism reflects perceived underdevelopment, an appreciation of regional distinctiveness, awareness of environmental adaptation, and faith in the future potential of the landscape. These localised elements of identity are not necessarily associated with the place of the region within the larger national or provincial identity, but are all exposed in the autonomy campaign.

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[5] Alan Artibise, "Boosterism and the Development of Prairie Cities," in Artibise ed. *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development*, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1981), 209-235; and Alan Artibise, "The Urban West: The Evolution of Prairie Towns and Cities to 1930," in Artibise and Gilbert Stelter eds., *The Canadian City*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 138-164.

[6] Artibise, "Boosterism," 215

[7] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace*.

The periodic demands for a new province or autonomous territory should not be considered well defined schemes. The speculative boosting tone of the original November 25, 1927 editorial and the lack of specific details suggest that the proposal was written in haste. Future proposals reflect this same problem. This information, however, does not remove the legitimacy of the question of secession. Chas. Frederick, the erratic publisher of both the *Record* and *Herald*, had his dream of a northern province approved at general meetings in the town of Peace River and throughout the North Peace area, and it won support from the Peace River Board of Trade on three separate occasions. While the autonomy scheme was never as popular in the Grande Prairie district, the 1927 editorials provoked a lengthy debate at the Grande Prairie UFA convention and considerable coffee-house discussion of the issue occurred, and by 1938, several Grande Prairie businessmen could be considered supporters.[8] The *Edmonton Journal* correspondent in the Peace country, moreover, remarked that "this question has been smouldering and gathering impetus within this territory for some time owing to a lack of a development program on the part of both provinces concerned ...."[9] Given that an on going dialogue existed in the Peace country, agreement with the general principles of autonomous political status may be the only common ground which existed.

In his editorials, consequently, Frederick attempted to give a broad definition to his provincial dream and explain the concept to the citizens of the region. He recognised that a diverse economic and land base would improve any new province's chance of success. Moreover, access to the Pacific coast was a central feature of the proposal. The province Frederick envisioned thus stretched from the Pacific to the interior of Alberta and encompassed the area between 54 degrees and 60 degrees of latitude. He argued that this region, given control of natural resources and a subsidy for those already alienated, was financially viable. It would assume that part of the Alberta and B.C. provincial debt chargeable to the territory. The Peace country, he reasoned, already produced more revenue in land and special taxes than the total government expenditure in the region. Frederick reserved his most spiteful comment for the question of administration. Replying to any suggestion that the region's population was insufficient to manage its affairs efficiently, he wrote "the degree of management so far given this territory is not such as to necessitate the amalgamated political brains of the two present provinces."[10]

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[8] *Record*, December 12, 1927, March 16, 1928, July 24, 1936, and August 21, 1936. *Herald*, December 16, 1927 and July 24, 1936. *Journal*, April 21, 1938.

[9] *Edmonton Journal*, November 25, 1927.

The lack of specifics in the proposal of 1927, made it easy to change and adjust to circumstances. The realisation that provincial administration was expensive and the recommendation from the Turgeon Commission that the number of provinces be reduced for the sake of economy, led the advocates of Peace River provincehood to change their proposal. When the B.C. Block floated the idea of joining Alberta in the summer of 1935, Frederick used it as an opportunity to advocate autonomy once again. This time, however, he advocated a less expensive form of autonomous government, a form which seemed to bridge the gap between territory and province. Rather than a provincial assembly, he called for a legislative council of 7 to 15 members modelled upon the North West Territories government (he made no mention of an election). The council would have complete administrative control, but tax powers would be vested solely in the Dominion.[11] This proposal continued to be advocated in 1938 when Frederick responded to external debates about changing provincial political jurisdictions. B.C. Premier Duff Pattullo contemplated provincial annexation of the Yukon during this period, and the Peace River Chamber of Commerce, instead, called for creation of a northern autonomous territory including Peace River country, Northern B.C., Yukon, and western NWT. It further advocated that no territorial transfer of any kind within the proposed new territory occur without approval of people in the north through a plebiscite.[12]

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[10] *Record*, November 25, 1927 and *Herald*, November 25, 1927.

[11] *Record*, July 26, 1935.

Neither Frederick nor his supporters provided a clear expression of the motives for secession of the Peace country from Alberta and British Columbia. At first glance, however, the relationship between Peace River and Edmonton, Vancouver and the provincial governments appears to be central to the issue. Pierre Gauvreau explained that the sectional differences in the Peace were briefly set aside due to the "deleteriousness on the part of the Alberta Government."[13] In the original 1927 proposal, Chas. Frederick blamed the metropolitan ambitions of both Edmonton and Vancouver, and their continued efforts to enslave and harness the potential of the Peace River region, for recession, underdevelopment, and failure, thereby suggesting that breaking this metropolitan tie would improve Peace River's economic condition. He explained that "[t]he trouble has been, and will continue to be, that attention will be paid to the needs of the north only insofar [sic] as the required development will be of direct benefit to the city of Edmonton, and no further."[14]

Page Rideout, one of Frederick's allies and at times the President of the Peace River Board of Trade, also criticised Edmonton. "The toll gate to the Peace River country is the city of Edmonton, who claims to have its letters patent as the gateway of to the entire north, and have proclaimed to the north country, 'the gates are mine to open as the gates are mine to close,' and those gates are opened just as the opening brings business to Edmonton."[15] Rideout did not limit his anger or attack to Edmonton. The Vancouver campaign to develop the Peace had similar motives. The *Vancouver Sun*, for example, promoted the Peace Country as part of its campaign to make Vancouver into a major grain handling port.[16] Rideout derided these objectives. He wrote, "[i]f they were allowed to the people of Vancouver would put a boom of logs across the mouth of the Fraser to keep boats out of New Westminster; they went into hysterics when Victoria was getting a dry dock; they would not allow a school of fish to go up the coast to Prince Rupert without the fish reporting first to Vancouver."[17] On another occasion, he compared Vancouver to a great octopus attempting to ensnare its prey in its tentacles.[18]

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[12] *Record*, April 21, 1938 and April 28, 1938. *Herald*, April 28, 1938. *Journal*, April 28, 1938 and April 29, 1938.

[13] PAA, Gauvreau Papers, Acc. 66.135, file J13, Draft Article on the History of the Peace, 1932."

[14] *Record*, December 2, 1927.

[15] *Record*, August 23, 1929.

In a traditional metropolitan interpretation then, the autonomy campaign could be regarded as an effort to break the exploitive relationship between the hinterland region and the metropolitan centres. Indeed, a similar autonomy campaign in Northern Ontario has been interpreted in this manner.[19] Remarks by Frederick, however, suggest he did not believe secession would improve the metropolitan relationship. "One would gather from the opposition expressed that Edmonton fears that secession would mean the cutting off of all trade as between Edmonton and the north. Unfortunately for us this would not be the case." Following secession, he regretfully acknowledged, the north would remain connected "to the apron strings of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce."[20] As proof, he cited the attitude of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce itself. The President, he claimed, had stated, "[f]ormation of a new independent area in the north might affect Edmonton's position as a distributing centre for the north to some extent, [but] the city's future as the main distributing centre for the north will remain unchallenged."[21] Why secede if the metropolitan relationship would remain unchanged?

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[16] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 376, R.J. Cromie (editor of the *Sun*) to Greenfield, June 13, 1925.

[17] *Record*, August 23, 1929.

[18] *Record*, October 25, 1929.

[19] G.R. Weller, "Political Disaffection in the Canadian Provincial North," *Bulletin of Canadian Studies* 9 (Spring 1985), 50-86.

[20] *Record*, April 28, 1938 and *Herald*, April 28, 1938.

[21] *Ibid.* The President's remarks can be found in the *Journal*, April 21, 1938.

Metropolitan relationships are about power. One element of this relationship is financially exploitation. Many in the Peace River country had recognised a dependence upon Alberta and Ottawa during the period before 1927. Carving farms out of the parkland wilderness and accessing off-shore markets through railway development was expensive business. Still by 1927, Frederick believed that the Peace Country paid more to Alberta in taxes than it received in services. The Alberta provincial government quickly defended its development strategy in Northern Alberta following the 1927 cry for autonomy. Premier Brownlee claimed that Alberta ran a deficit in its administration of the Peace River region and pointed to the debt obligations incurred building northern rail roads. In his first response to the secession editorial, Premier Brownlee released figures to demonstrate that the Peace Country cost far more to administer than it paid in taxes. His financial assessment, which included large amounts for Peace River's share of the NAR debt, had a significant impact.[22] Frederick lamented that not enough people in the Peace supported his position on autonomy in a January 1, 1932 editorial. He held out hope that more people would take out the wishbone and install a backbone to stand up to province and take the step towards autonomy.[23]

Frederick refused to accept Brownlee's financial statements. In his newspapers, he claimed several costs attributed to the Peace Country seemed unwarranted or misplaced. Why for instance did the region have to pay for the Alberta government's mishandling of the Edmonton and Dunvegan line? Or, more to the point, where did the Premier find that his government had spent $175,000 for a traffic bridge? The original plan for the Peace River bridge had a traffic deck, but "THE TRAFFIC DECK HAS NEVER BEEN BUILT ... If Mr. Brownlee's government has spent so large a sum in building any traffic decks, he would be well advised to send out search parties to find out where they have been mislaid."[24] It proved to be a futile effort, however. At a well attended debate orchestrated by the Peace River Board of Trade, the pro-autonomy delegates concentrated on resources and potential of the region to advocate it could overcome its small population. The negative concentrated on financial prohibitiveness of the proposal, and emphasised that no money would be available from resources since the Dominion controlled most of them. Even the *Record* admitted that the negative side had won, and that such arguments were persuasive.[25]

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[22] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc.69.289, 236, "Premier's Statement on Peace River." *Journal*, November 28, 1927.

[23] *Record*, January 1, 1932.

[24] *Record*, Dec. 9, 1927.

The financial issue remained important, nonetheless, and throughout the 1930s, Frederick and his supporters complained that the Peace failed to receive its share of provincial expenditures in road construction, road maintenance, and relief.[26] "We are only asking that the government return to the north country the funds that it has taken from the north and **MISAPPROPRIATED** in development of other parts of the province," he noted on one occasion.[27] In another editorial, Frederick claimed political autonomy would allow the Peace country to escape from the burden of the provincial debt and southern problems. He agreed that the northern share of the provincial debt could be traced to the building of the ED & BC railway system, but the province, because of economic problems in southern Alberta, had failed to use the money it recouped on the sale of NAR to pay down this debt. It was unreasonable, he noted, to expect the Peace country to continue to finance southern development.[28] The issue of financial exploitation remained futile, however. Hugh Allen continued his assault on the financial stability of a new autonomous territory in 1936, and the *Peace River Block News* also expressed opposition to the secession scheme because it feared the financial implications. Both believed that a better alternative existed through accommodation and co-operation with existing governments. The *Edmonton Journal* reflected similar sentiments writing

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[25] *Record*, March 16, 1928.

[26] *Record*, October 6, 1933 and March 8, 1935. *Block News*, January 10, 1933, February 28, 1933, and March 29, 1935.

[27] *Record*, November 3, 1933. [emphasis original]

[28] *Record*, April 29, 1938.

"Peace River has much more to gain by staying with Alberta and drawing upon the combined resources of the citizens of this province than it would through the adoption of [the autonomy scheme]."[29]

While financial exploitation was a core element of the autonomy campaign, other contemporaries saw another side of the metropolitan relationship. They linked the autonomy issue to the campaign for transportation facilities. L.A. Giroux, the Liberal MLA for Grouard, claimed the government's stalling tactics and its unwillingness to give serious consideration to such regional issues had sparked the provincehood demands. Hugh Allen, the UFA MLA for Peace River, went even further calling the 1927 provincehood campaign a publicity stunt aimed at forcing the government's hand.[30] Similarly, Brownlee suggested that the autonomy campaign was little more than an effort by a few malcontents to blackmail the province into building a coast-outlet railway and an all weather highway to the south.[31] By 1927, these two specific concerns dominated the political scene in the Peace River country. They underline the problems within the metropolitan relationship and suggest a demand for more metropolitan intervention rather than exploitation may have sparked the autonomy campaign. Not only did the two transportation concerns eclipse all other issues during the 1925 and 1926 election campaigns, but also in the everyday communication between the region's leadership and the governments in Edmonton, Vancouver and Ottawa. No other problems had such wide acceptance in the Peace country as the dual transportation issues of the coast railway and highways. Most important, the Peace River country was able to rally around the longstanding demand for direct railway connection to the Pacific coast, and a highway connection with the southern cities. Hence a close examination of these two concerns may help explain the demand for provincial status.

Geographic isolation overshadowed early development of the Peace River region.

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[29] *Block News*, February 17, 1931. *Herald* July 17, 1936. *Journal*, "Editorial," April 21, 1938.

[30] *The UFA*, February 23, 1928. *Record*, February 24, 1928.

[31] PAA, Premier's Papers, Acc. 69.289, file 236, "Premier's Statement."

Cut off from Edmonton by the muskeg, forest, and hills of the Athabasca river drainage system and from Vancouver by the Rocky Mountains, people in the Peace country struggled to break their isolation. Settlers told numerous stories about the hardships faced on the Grouard or Edson trails.[32] The Province of Alberta's decision to finance the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia railway was extremely important in this regard. The expensive undertaking meant people could enter and leave the district with reasonable ease, and the products of Peace River farms had access to markets. The ED & BC, however, was poorly constructed, transportation was slow, and the costs prohibitive. Worst of all, the ED & BC's circuitous route to market appeared to serve Edmonton far more than the Peace country.

The post-war recession of 1921-5 had led the people of the Peace River region to see the railway as more of a problem than an asset. High freight rates charged on the railway were part of the problem, but the route issue became more important to the people of the Peace. In a direct line, Grande Prairie was only 1300 km from tidewater at Vancouver, yet grain from the area travelled nearly 2100 km to the Lakehead. If a railway could be built from the Peace country to meet either the Canadian National System or the Pacific Great Eastern system, then the distance to market and the cost of marketing would be reduced. Although divisions existed in the Peace country on the question of the route for a coast outlet railway, no one in the region disputed the need for such a railway.

Political promises and the rhetoric of Sir Henry Thornton and Sir E.W. Beatty suggested a coast outlet railway would be constructed in the near future.[33] While touring the region in 1925, Thornton had made what appeared to be a firm pledge to build the railway when Peace River grain production reached 10,000,000 bushels per year.[34] The 1927 crop nearly reached this goal and as immigration to the Peace country continued unabated, the objective would certainly be reached in 1928. Frederick could state without modesty:

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[32] J.G. MacGregor, *Trails to Peace River*, (Grande Prairie, 1986).

[33] King had made positive statements about a coast outlet railway in Edmonton. *Journal*, October 11, 1924; *Vancouver Province*, October 22, 1924; and *Vancouver Evening Sun*, October 22, 1924. Meighen also looked upon the outlet with some sympathy. Meighen to H.G. Dunsdale, October 8, 1925, NAC, Meighen Papers, MG 26 I, vol. 80. Many in Alberta also expressed support. NAC, Mackenzie King Papers, vol. 89, 70936, "Edmonton Board of Trade Resolution, May 16, 1923;" *Ibid.*, vol. 126, 95215-6, John Blue (Sec. Edmonton Board of Trade) to King, May 15, 1925; and *ibid.*, vol 125, 94257-8, "Resolution of the Alberta Legislature, March 10, 1925." The King

> The Peace River country will continue to develop until in a surprisingly short time the traffic from this district will become so great that the railways themselves will be forced to provide a shorter and cheaper outlet for our products. That time is coming much faster than the pessimists would have us believe.[35]

Despite this optimism, the coast outlet railway failed to materialise in 1927. Moreover, the long awaited engineer's report was made public in 1927 and it rejected all routes as too expensive.[36] The Dominion, re-released this report with a few additions in 1932, and thus suggested that an outlet would not be forthcoming for some time.[37]

The only thing standing in the way seemed to be the provincial interests in the PGE and ED & BC; two railways built more for the interests of the southern promoters than for the district. Both Alberta and British Columbia seemed more intent upon salvaging their investments in these enterprises than supporting a Peace River coast outlet railway.[38] Premier Oliver of B.C. opposed any coast outlet venture which did not

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Papers also contain evidence of a letter writing campaign by Alberta M.L.A.s in 1924.

[34] *Record*, June 4, 1925.

[35] *Record*, March 24, 1927.

[36] *Supra*, Chapter 7.

[37] NAC, Bennett Papers, 380280-3, C.R. Crysdale, C.S. Gzowski, J.M.R. Fairbairn to Hon. R.J. Manion, December 11, 1931. House of Commons, Sessional Papers, 1932, Sessional Paper No. 125.

[38] *Canadian Railway and Marine World* (hereafter *CRMW*), 1925, 74. *Record* January 15, 1925 and January 22, 1925. *Herald* January 12, 1925 and January 19, 1925. Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie Basin, 73-76.

include the PGE.[39] Why saddle the Peace country with the PGE fiasco to appease Vancouver businessmen when a good port existed at Prince Rupert? Indeed, the interest of Vancouver in the district as demonstrated by the PGE was looked upon as exploitation, and helped win support from northern B.C..[40]

The ED & BC also represented a liability in the campaign for a coast outlet. Railway engineers factored in the reduced traffic on this line into their cost-benefit analysis of the outlet. Northerners understood that above all else the province desired to protect its interests in this line.[41] "The Province of Alberta," Frederick's secession editorial shrieked, "has not only sidestepped its responsibility, but so far as Edmonton and Calgary are concerned, these cities view with alarm any prospect of the north country being given the opportunity that should be afforded through the provision of an outlet to the coast .... The program voiced by either city is not so much one of development of the Peace as EXPLOITATION of the Peace."[42] The negotiations to sell the ED & BC and Central Canadian rail lines only heightened the northern grievances. Little consultation occurred between the Brownlee government and the Peace River boosters. Afterwards, Page Rideout commented that if Brownlee had sold a railway affecting the south like the NAR did the north, "somebody in that district so affected would have been consulted before the deal was closed....But here he has an offer equivalent to $26,000,000 for so many miles of railway in his northern colony, and bang goes the hammer and the deal is closed."[43] This lack of consultation was aggravated by the eventual joint purchase of these lines by the CNR and CPR. As Professor Zaslow correctly concludes, the interest of the CPR and CNR in the Dunvegan line kept these companies from seriously pursuing the outlet issue.[44] The Peace River boosters, moreover, understood this problem and blamed the Alberta government for the situation.[45]

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[39] NAC, King Papers vol 113, 86307, Oliver to King, April 8, 1924. *Ibid.*, vol. 119, 90167, Oliver to King, Aug. 11, 1924. *Ibid.*, vol. 139, 103368-9, Oliver to King, Mar. 18, 1925.

[40] *Record*, April 12, 1929 and October 25, 1929.

[41] A Reply to Hon. W. Turgeon," *Record*, March 18, 1932.

[42] *Peace River Record*, November 25, and December 9, 1927.

[43] *Record*, March 25, 1932.

The coast outlet railway reappears as an issue throughout the 1930s thus adding credibility to the belief that it was a factor in the secession movement. "If We Are to Live We Must Insist Upon Our Rights -- The Peace River Outlet" declared the *Peace River Block News* in June 1931. In the 1933 B.C. provincial election the railway issue resurfaced and the residents were outraged when newly elected independent MLA C.M.F. Planta declared it was unnecessary.[46] The issue generated more excitement in 1934, and in 1935 one resident exclaimed, "Can settlers be blamed for recalling the promises of rail road development which induced them to settle on land that had no other drawbacks once such promises would be fulfilled?"[47]

The coast outlet, however, is not a completely sufficient explanation for the Peace River secession movement. In 1938, for example, while Page Rideout continued to advocate a railway to Prince Rupert, the Peace River autonomy proposal makes more reference to northern highway and waterway connections than a coast outlet.[48] Furthermore, the overwhelming support of all Peace River settlers for a coast outlet never served to unite the Peace Country. The North Peace district, the Spirit River district, the Grande Prairie district, and the Pouce Coupé district all promoted alternative routes to the coast depending upon their own self-interest.[49] A route along the north side of the Peace River, through Peace Pass to the Rocky Mountain Trench and hence to the coast via Prince George or Hazelton and Prince Rupert had wide acclaim in the town of Peace River and in the B.C. Block. An alternative which both these districts and the Spirit River district considered possible used Pine Pass west of Pouce Coupé to reach Prince George. The Grande Prairie country, however, had no desire to see either of these routes chosen.[50] Settlers in this district considered shorter spur lines to the CNR main line as a better solution. They had a powerful ally in CNR President Henry Thornton. Several investigations and surveys along the various routes kindled the flames of discontent amongst Peace River settlers.[51]

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[44] Zaslow, "Development of the Mackenzie Basin," 87-8.

[45] Page Rideout in the *Journal*, April 29, 1938.

[46] The headline is from *Block News*, June 16, 1931; See *Record*, Oct. 16, 1931 for call by Associated Boards of Trade of Peace River District for a coast outlet. For Peace River Block frustration with Planta see *Block News*, January 2, 1934 and January 16, 1934.

[47] *Block News*, February 6, 1934 and March 1, 1935.

[48] *Journal*, April 20, 1938 and April 29, 1938.

The impact of highways paralleled that of the outlet. Few issues could excite the Peace River communities like roads and meetings were often marked by chaos. Author R.M. Patterson remarked that one meeting in the Battle River district was reduced to an hour and a half of bedlam, broken only when someone played a Red River jig on a fiddle. After the perpetrator was thrown out, the meeting resumed for another half hour of fighting.[52] The year 1927 had begun with signs that a new era was over the horizon. A highway between Peace River and Edmonton was projected for the year; a highway which promised to break the bleak isolation of the Peace Country from the rest of the province; a highway which, nevertheless, resembled a cart path rather than a road. Just weeks before his secession editorial Frederick remarked, "many of us are getting old waiting for the developments that were promised many years ago, and which have not yet been accomplished."[53] The eventual construction of a trail between Edmonton and the Peace River country did little to assuage the autonomy boosters. The dirt road was impassable when wet, and the district found itself still waiting for a gravelled all-weather road in 1935 when floods at Lesser Slave Lake and on the Smoky River isolated the district from the rest of the world.[54]

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[49] This dispute surfaced as early as 1924 and continued to provoke controversy throughout the period of study. It became so bad that some claimed two outlets would be necessary. *Record*, October 2, 1924. "Resolution of Elmworth UFA, January 10, 1934," PAA, Northern Alberta Railway Papers, Acc. 86.587, file 265b. One headline demonstrates the anger this issue could engender. "What is it to be -- Exploitation or Development -- The Obed Route or Prosperity." *Block News*, Mar. 1, 1935.

[50] A Beaverlodge resident wrote that Grande Prairie had its own well being at heart. NAC, King Papers v. 123, 93117, S.R. Smith to King, October 10, 1924.

[51] The CPR examined the Peace and Pine Pass routes in 1923 and the CNR investigated the Brulé Lake cutoff in 1923 and 1924. *CRMW*, 1923, 320, 367, 426, 474; and *CRMW*, 1924, 280j, 448.

[52] PABC, R.M. Patterson Papers, Add.MSS 2762, Box 3, file 5, Patterson to Fenwick, Mar 27, 1926.

Like the coast outlet railway, however, the highway issue led to divisions, not only on the route to Edmonton, but also on the proposed highway to the coast in the 1930s.[55] The route from Grande Prairie to Edmonton, for example, passed through Dunvegan and Peace River before heading south to High Prairie. The town of Grande Prairie had long sought a short route for highway traffic via Whitecourt to Edmonton, and failing that through DeBolt to High Prairie. Such a road threatened the town of Peace River's claim as the eastern gateway to the Peace River region. Furthermore, during the Depression, district residents proposed construction of a coast outlet highway as a relief project, but once again divisions became noticeable. In the Beaverlodge, and Grande Prairie district, the Monkman Pass route was favoured. A few people in the B.C. Block supported this alternative, but most desired routes through the Rockies via Peace or Pine passes. In the North Peace, promoters advocated the Northern Alberta and B.C. highway along the north side of the Peace River and through the Peace Pass to Finlay Forks. They had no interest in the Monkman Pass route, although they never actively opposed this venture.

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[53] *Record*, October 13, 1927.

[54] *Record*, March 15, 1935 and June 5, 1936. *Block News*, May 17, 1935 and July 5, 1935. The *Block News* remarked the weather "has brought home very forcibly, the isolation of this part of the province of British Columbia." The campaign for gravel continued in 1936. *Herald*, July 17, 1936.

[55] *Supra*, Chapter 7.

Despite the intra-regional divisions on the railway and highway projects, the apathy of the metropolitan community and its ignorance of conditions in the region as demonstrated in the provincial government's lack of commitment upon the transportation issues was a motivating factor for Peace River regionalism. Frederick lambasted provincial management of the region in a 1932 commentary.

> The provinces of British Columbia and Alberta have failed in their responsibilities as administrators of this vast area, and have demonstrated their inability to properly administer the vast territory which was taken from Rupert's Land and the North West Territories and added to their areas when they were given their autonomy.[56]

Others echoed Frederick's concern. In B.C., W.S. Simpson referred to the Peace as "The No Man's Land of British Columbia Politics,"[57] and the publisher of the *Block News* bluntly surmised "[t]he trouble with the Peace River Block, as with the Alberta side of the Peace River country, is that neither the government of British Columbia nor Alberta gives a tinkers dam whether we survive or not."[58]

The transportation issues represent a serious complaint by the people of the Peace country, and exhibit the inequalities of the metropolitan hinterland relationship, but they only partially explain the autonomy movement. The engineer's rejection of the coast-outlet in 1927 was certainly disappointing. The railway problem, however, had persisted for several years, and subsequent reports suggested that the improved freight rates and branch line construction program implemented after 1925 had reduced agitation on this issue.[59] Under these circumstances it seems unlikely that the coast outlet issue alone caused the provincehood demands. The highway issue also seems dubious because promises from the Alberta government in 1927 suggested that it was closer to a solution than at any previous time. Furthermore, during the Depression many in the region realised the coast outlet railway had to await better economic conditions, and by 1938, the residents of the Peace River country had taken the matter of the coast-outlet highway into their own hands. Hence the coast outlet railway, the Peace River-Edmonton highway, the coast-outlet highway cannot explain the *Record*'s claim that the Peace country was ready for provincial status.

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[56] *Record*, January 1, 1932.

[57] *Block News*, January 10, 1933.

[58] *Block News*, July 26, 1935.

[59] Report of the Committee of Railway Engineers Appointed to Consider the Peace River Outlet," in Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Paper #125*, 1932.

The misunderstanding of Peace River problems by the provincial governments extended beyond the transportation issues. All districts in the Peace River country blamed the provinces for a failure to recognise the distinctive regional requirements of their home. The antagonism between the Peace Country and the provincial administrations in Alberta and British Columbia had a long history of discontent. Following the first settlement wave, the Alberta government had demonstrated little concern over the welfare of northern farmers. It encouraged farmers to purchase livestock after the great war with low interest loans, but offered no assistance as cattle prices dropped and feed shortages occurred.[60] Another example of Alberta's disinterest in northern affairs in the mid-1920s came in the area of highway maintenance. A.H. McQuarrie, long time Superintendent of Roads for the Peace Country, recalled that shortly after dividing the province into ten road districts, the Public Works Department requested he do some extra work. It seemed the Department was having trouble handling the work around Smith from the base in Edmonton and thought McQuarrie could deal with it from Grande Prairie. The distance from Edmonton to Smith was 130 miles by rail, and the city had a road connection via Athabasca. Grande Prairie was over 350 miles by rail and no road connection. The only justification for the request seemed to be that both centres were north of Edmonton.[61] Many of the Boards of Trade in the Peace region, moreover, claimed Edmonton interests discouraged northern settlement in favour of areas better connected to the Edmonton business community.[62]

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[60] *Record*, February 15, 1923 and March 1, 1923. "The government has discontinued that policy," was the response cited by Frederick to northern farmer pleas for assistance.

[61] A.H. McQuarrie, "Money and other Matters," in Albright Papers, GMA, M8, file 8.

The most important issues were the problems of homesteading in the bush, obtaining sufficient water, relief for new settlers, and provincial enforcement of game laws.[63] All of the districts had to contend with the difficult process of fighting back the forest and creating a homestead within the bush. The repeated calls for provincial assistance, however, went unanswered. Similarly, the provincial governments provided no assistance to those facing the problem of poor water supplies and seemed oblivious to the specific relief problems caused by Depression settlement in the region. The game laws seem to reflect this attitude. These laws were geared to southern conservation requirements and failed to reflect the on-going requirement of many Peace River settlers to hunt for food.

In B.C., the expression of angst towards the provincial government originated in the district's ties to Alberta and in the failure of the outlet projects. Many of the district's organisations and institutions were tied to Alberta. The first hospital built at Pouce Coupé on October 17, 1921, for example, was staffed and equipped by Alberta Red Cross.[64] Similarly, the United Farmers of the Peace River Block joined United Farmers of Alberta instead of a B.C. organisation and the Peace River Farmer-Labour Association joined with the Alberta CCF rather than B.C. party.[65] Other associations such as the United Church, the Anglican Church and the postmasters also had Peace

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[62] *Record*, March 19, 1935 and August 12, 1926.

[63] For information on settlement of the forest lands see *Supra*, Chapter 3. *Supra*, Chapter 5 and 6 contain information about the water supply and relief. For three different examples which cite these various concerns see the resolutions of District 'J' Farmers Institute in *Block News*, January 2, 1934; the Report of the Associated Boards of Trade meeting, June 10, 1935 in *Record*, June 14, 1935; and PABC, Maitland Papers, Add.MSS 781, box 3, file 14, W.S. Simpson to Royal Maitland, August 4, 1945.

[64] PABC, Esme Tuck, "A Homesteading Saga of Peace River," Add.MSS 752.

[65] *Record*, March 12, 1920. *Block News*, June 6, 1933, March 26, 1942 and February 12, 1942.

River regional units.[66] The district's sporting events, moreover, drew teams from Alberta and heated competition existed between Dawson Creek, Grande Prairie, Wembley, Beaverlodge, Hythe, and Pouce Coupé for the P.V. Croken Cup in hockey supremacy.[67] The B.C. Block therefore shared several common social characteristics with the Alberta sections of the Peace Region.

Politically, several ties also existed. "At the present," C.S. Kitchen remarked in 1930 following the transfer of the Peace River Block to B.C. jurisdiction, "the only contact between the farmers of the Block and the rest of the province is through the efforts of our local agriculturalist," and he only arrived in 1929.[68] The only time B.C. seemed to care about the district, he noted two years later, came at tax time.[69] The Associated Boards of Trade of Peace River had recognised that the boundary between Alberta and B.C. was simply administrative, and as late as 1938, Louis LeBourdais, a long time member of B.C. legislature, could write that Aberhart, Edmonton, and Calgary were better known in the Block than Vancouver, Victoria, and Pattullo.[70] The failure of B.C. to promote an effective political bond with the Peace River Block led the district to consider joining Alberta in 1935.[71] Harry Giles, the editor of the *Block News* wrote:

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[66] *Block News*, October 10, 1933, February 27, 1934.

[67] The local newspaper was filled with sporting information. For just a few examples in both winter and summer see: *Block News*, February 13, 1931, January 26, 1932, December 21, 1934, March 1, 1935, March 8, 1935, February 19, 1937, July 16, 1937, February 2, 1939, and January 23, 1941.

[68] *Block News*, September 9, 1930.

[69] *Block News*, October 11, 1932.

[70] *Block News*, July 3, 1934. *Province*, January 27, 1938, in PABC, Louis LeBourdais Collection, Add.MSS 676, vol. 10, file 2. The recognition of Alberta politicians existed in the 1920s. Glen Braden, later a Peace River MLA in B.C., referred to Alberta MLA Hugh Allen as his representative. PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 62, Braden to Allen, March 1, 1928.

[71] This issue was first mentioned in the *Block News*, March 29, 1935 and July 5, 1935. *Journal*, July 17, 1935. *Record*, July 26, 1935. Frederick, always promoting

> Since the natural resources of the Block were turned over to the Province practically nothing has been done to develop them. It appears as if we were an unwelcome orphan left on Victoria's doorstep. If this is correct, could not the province of B.C. make some arrangements with Alberta for assuming the responsibility? We can assure them that there would be very little opposition here.[72]

Later he noted that no demand for provincial status existed in the district, but self-preservation would dictate such a program if B.C. continued to neglect the Block.[73]

The perceived neglect of Peace River affairs led to consideration of the region's political representation in Edmonton and Victoria.[74] As early as 1915, the district believed it was entitled to greater representation in the provincial government and this crusade continued into the 1930s. In 1931, for instance, the three northern constituencies of Grouard, Peace River and Grande Prairie had a greater population than the six southern-most provincial ridings and all three constituencies had populations above the provincial average.[75] The federal electoral district which incorporated Peace River included such different communities as Jasper, Edson, Spruce Grove, Athabasca, Grande Prairie, Three Creeks, and Fort Vermilion. It incorporated nearly one third of the total area in the Province of Alberta. Despite repeated calls for redistribution and the incompatibility of interests amongst these communities, the federal constituency remained

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autonomy, questioned the proposal. "It has been known for a long time that the difficulties of the people of the Block, due at least in part to the great distance from the capital of their province, have been such as to cause great unrest. But their troubles must be bad indeed if they are willing to exchange their present lot to place themselves under such a government as we have had in Alberta for the past ten or fourteen years."

[72] *Block News*, July 5, 1935.

[73] *Block News*, August 2, 1935.

[74] *Record*, January 22, 1925; and *Record*, December 2, 1927. The President of the Peace River Board of Trade, Page Rideout emphasised this issue in *Record*, December 9, 1927. Others shared this concern. See "Grande Prairie UFA Resolution, January 12, 1927," PAA, Hugh Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 60.

[75] *Record*, October 1, 1915, January 22, 1925, April 26, 1926, and August 11, 1933.

unchanged until 1936.[76] The Peace Block had similar concerns as it was lumped with Prince George and the Omineca district in federal politics and until 1933 had no provincial representation. Its anger was frequently expressed in editorials.[77]

The roots of Peace River regionalism are thus linked to the inequities of the metropolitan-hinterland relationship in the provincial political economy. Care must be taken, however, not to confuse regionalism with the regional identity. While the districts in the region were thus united in some form of economic and political confrontation with the southern provincial governments, it is not acceptable to define the aspirations of the Peace country solely in terms of external relationships. W.L. Morton railed against such interpretations of western Canadian history a generation ago, and his emphasis of internal dynamics within the prairies has important connotations for the Peace River autonomy movement as well.[78] Looking deeper into the autonomy campaign reveals other aspects of the regional identity which might be missed if the focus of study remained solely upon the metropolitan grievances.

Doug Owram's perspective on myth and imagery must also be considered. The demand for provincial status must be grounded in the renewed optimism of 1927, and the realisation that the high expectations of the imagery were about to be fulfilled. The year 1927 seemed to be a time of decision and optimism. Resentment over the failure of the province to provide an all-weather road and the federal government to build a coast outlet reached a peak in 1927 as the Peace country appeared on the verge on fulfilling the expectations of its boosters. The philosophy of boosterism may be used to help explain the autonomy movement in two ways. First, while boosterism is usually restricted to communities, special circumstances in the Peace Country make this idea applicable on a regional basis. Second, supporters of the autonomy movement were focused primarily in the North Peace, and especially in the town of Peace River. Their campaign reflects their aspirations for their own town.

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[76] *Record*, September 15, 1921, August 24, 1928, March 24, 1933, and May 15, 1936.

[77] *Block News*, August 23, 1932, October 11, 1932, January 2, 1934, and February 8, 1935.

[78] Morton, "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History," in *Approaches to Canadian History*, Carl Berger, ed., 42-9.

Peace River autonomy promoters ignored the economic realities of life in the region. The irony of Brownlee's acknowledgement that Alberta subsidised the region's entrepreneurial economy was lost on the image makers. The region's economy, however, was weak and immature. Wheat remained a risky cash crop in the region, and forest, oil, gas, and coal resources remained untapped. Local governments could not even afford to provide adequate roads for the community. Given these economic realities, the autonomy movement appears to be another example of the speculative, booster identity.

The region's self-confidence can be traced to the pattern of settlement. Euro-Canadians began to arrive in the "Empire within an Empire" began prior to the First World War. The region had been promoted as the last frontier for agriculture -- a region of nearly unlimited potential. The arrival of the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway in 1916 only served to enhance the already high expectations residents had for the region. Its future seemed bright following the Great War as Soldier Settlement schemes added new and welcome settlers to the area. The perception of unlimited potential dominated the Peace River mind-set. W.D. Albright even wrote an article titled "Province of the Peace."[79] The post-war depression, however, severely retarded growth in the developing north, and lingered far longer than in the south. Indeed, population and the number of farms in the Peace country actually declined between 1921 and 1926.[80] The exodus of people had a crushing effect on the region's promoters. While economic conditions improved in most areas of the prairies in 1924 and 1925, only the record crop of 1927 seemed to restore confidence in the Peace.[81] "Optimism prevails among the settlers of the Peace River district today, an optimism that tomorrow will be justified, for the district is enjoying it real prosperity due to the wonderful crops which were harvested this fall."[82]

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[79] The article was not about secession but its title is indicative of the attitude of people towards the future. *The Nor-West Farmer*, Dec. 5, 1922 in GMA, Albright Papers, M8, file 2.

[80] *Census of Canada, Agriculture*, p. 127 and *Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1926*, p. 710 See Robert Irwin, "Settlement and Land Tenure in the Peace River Country: A Study of Township 83-25-West of 5," *Past Imperfect*, vol. 1, 1992 (forthcoming).

The year 1927 thus represented something of a watershed in the history of Peace River. The failure of the government to promote the region in the ten years following the War had left a feeling of bitterness; bitterness which could now be voiced without fear of economic repercussion. The optimism of 1927 can not be overstated. Writing in favour of the autonomy proposal, Page Rideout cited Sir Donald Mann declaring "that in the Last Great West lying between the Portland Canal and the valley of the Peace lies the most productive mineral and agricultural potential empire in North America."[83] Such sentiments coming from people outside the district were common. R.J. Cromie, the editor of the *Vancouver Sun*, and an ardent Peace River booster called Mackenzie King "a goose" for not seeing the potential of the district. He informed the Prime Minister, "[t]he big political play in Canada today is Peace River: Make it yours."[84] His campaign included several articles in his newspaper, including one with the headline: "CANADA'S great HOT HOUSE: The Peace River Country."[85] Another commentator describing the importance of the Pacific Great Eastern wrote, "I say without any fear of being contradicted by any practical man that, wealthy as the other three Prairie Provinces are and will become, this so-called Peace River country will head them all."[86] Even federal cabinet minister Dr. J.H. King remarked "I was simply amazed at the stupendousness of that great agricultural Empire of the North and its potentialities."[87]

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[81] Dawson, *Settlement of the Peace River Country*, Appendix B, Table 1, 262.

[82] *Bulletin*, December 8, 1927.

[83] Page Rideout, "Why a New Province?" *Record*, Dec. 9, 1927.

[84] NAC, King Papers, 83834, Cromie to Sen. Andrew Haydon, Aug 5, 1924; *Ibid.*, 83836, Cromie to King, August 5, 1924; and *Ibid.*, 13784, Cromie to King, September 28, 1929.

[85] *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, October 25, 1924.

[86] *Victoria Colonist*, February 14, 1926.

Given these sentiments, it is understandable that the residents of the Peace River country continued to see their home as a paradise. Frederick emphasised the potential of the province of Peace River in a series of articles. The "Dominion's Greatest Heritage Included Within Area Proposed as Canada's Tenth Province," one of his headlines chimed.[88] No doubt the key element to the whole provincehood issue lay in the potential exploitation of the northern resources. In the classic overstatement common to newspaper and mining boosters, Frederick quoted a northern B.C. mine owner that "The potential empire drained by the Hay and the Peace has more mineral, forest, agricultural and hydro resources than had the defunct German and Austrian empires."[89] This belief in the potential wealth of the region, moreover, led to criticism of the metropolitan communities. The editor of the *Block News* angrily claimed Vancouver failed to recognise the region's importance as an economic hinterland.

> To all appearances it has not yet penetrated the armour-plated craniums of our intelligentsia in a place called Vancouver -- a small hamlet situated in the wild mountainous regions of the west coast of North America, 4280 miles from Yokohoma; 1000 miles north of the city of San Francisco and about 1500 miles south of Fairbanks, Alaska -- that it is not lack of communication, but transportation facilities that has prevented this country from putting Vancouver on the map and making a real city of it.[90]

Thus his anger at Vancouver came from its unwillingness to assist the district fulfil its potential rather than a sense of metropolitan exploitation.

While the speculative booster orientation of the region's identity influenced the campaign for regional unity, the distinctive settlement islands in the Peace River Country also shared certain environmental characteristics related to the settlement process and agricultural development. Life in the Peace River district had not been easy for the agricultural pioneers. Mary Percy Jackson commented:

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[87] NAC, King Papers, v. 170, 122648-9, J.H. King to Mackenzie King, Sept. 1, 1927.

[88] *Record*, January 13, 1928.

[89] *Record*, January 13, 1928.

[90] *Block News*, April 6, 1939.

> You know I'd never recommend anyone to homestead in Canada. Farming out here is just as uncertain as anywhere else, and this homestead entry, with a unit of 160 acres, practically forces men into growing grain, which is notoriously the biggest gamble of all. There are a good many families up here now who are a good deal nearer to starvation than any I've ever seen in England. And as for the housing conditions - well - two families (6-10 people) living in a one-roomed house 10 x 12 x 7 is not even considered overcrowding.[91]

Another commentator, Ralph Sketch, remarked "[w]hen one sees [the covered wagons of new settlers] and some of the land they have to break one realises some of the hardships the poor devils have to put up with." Yet few were willing to express disillusionment with the condition of life. Sketch noted the old timers "are very proud of their country, ... and are making great strides to prosperity."[92] One traveller noted:

> the tough winters are incidental to the thousands of hardy men and women who have established themselves on the homesteads. It's just another part of the fight they continually wage with nature to wrest a living from the land.[93]

Rather than give up in despair, the Peace River settlers made a virtue of their struggle and continued to emphasise the richness of the land.

The autonomy campaign reflected these aspects of regional unity. Peace River farmers and urban promoters continuously strove for new farm techniques, new crop rotations, and new speculative mining and resource development schemes. In this struggle, they shared common perspectives upon the potential of the landscape and the problems it posed to development. A Grande Prairie publication claimed:

> The opportunity to assist in the development of this magnificent "Inland Empire" and to establish homes for themselves beckons to every young

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[91] Jackson, *On the Last Frontier*, 66.

[92] PAA, Letter of Ralph Sketch, 1930, Acc. 75.338.

[93] Ellis, "Where Farms Meet Frontiers," *Beaver* September 1941, 45.

> man and woman of the pioneer type, prepared to work hard and put up with certain inconveniences.
>
> To those contemplating a move, no better place can be chosen than the Grande Prairie District in the famous Valley of the Peace.[94]

The boosters continued to promote the mythical Peace River rather than the stark reality they faced. "Extremes of temperature, sudden changes and severe storms are very rare," one pamphlet suggested. "The winters, while not classified as mild, are very dry, with clear skies, little snowfall, and few winds. Blizzards are unknown!"[95] All accepted that the struggle to overcome the landscape generated a distinctive pioneer mentality amongst the Peace country settlers.

These adaptations to the landscape were important in both 1927 and 1938, the two most serious efforts to establish an autonomous territory. All of the residents of the Peace had shared in the long struggle to create a farm in an unfamiliar and challenging landscape. In 1927, the experimentation with wheat, coarse grains, and livestock appeared over as the region shifted to wheat production on a large scale. Settlers from the dried out southern prairies flooded into the Peace River region and expanded the agricultural landscape as they cleared the forest from their homesteads. Commercial agricultural success seemed assured. Herman Trelle had won the Chicago Grain exposition with his sample of Marquis wheat from Wembley. The Dominion, furthermore, had just introduced Garnet wheat, the new early maturing variety which seemed to assure that the Peace River climate would not interfere in the agricultural process.

The situation in 1938 was different, but no less, important. The Peace River country was emerging from the Depression and agriculture had rebounded. The region had gained a reputation for high-quality grain had been achieved through the efforts of Trelle, Lloyd and Justin Rigby, Robert Cochrane, and Jack Allsop, and Seed Growers'

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[94] Grande Prairie Board of Trade, *Facts Worth Knowing! About the Famous GRANDE PRAIRIE DISTRICT in the Peace River Country* (n.d. 1926?), 5.

[95] *Grimshaw District, Peace Municipality and the Battle River Prairie*, (Peace River: n.d., 1928?).

Associations had been formed throughout the region. Cattle and swine production had increased dramatically. The mixed farm economy which would dominate the region in the future had been established and farmers on the grey-wooded soil had turned to hay production. The settlers, moreover, had taken the transportation concerns into their own hands and volunteers cut trails along the Monkman Pass and Northern Alberta and B.C. highway routes. The settlers, it appeared, had overcome the obstacles of the landscape.

The regional unity, nevertheless, was partly an illusion. While the common struggle to create a farm from the landscape united the community, the landscape also divided the region. The Peace River itself proved a barrier to intra-regional communication. In reality, a single Peace River country never existed. The river and its tributaries as well as the heavy forests in the region divided the Peace country into six sections. The barriers geography posed for transportation often resulted in varying perspectives on issues of importance. Even farm practices changed from one section to another. The division into North and South Peace in Alberta led to distrust amongst the residents of the districts.[96]

This regional disunity is also reflected in the autonomy campaign. Peace River, Grande Prairie, and Dawson Creek merchants competed for a dominant commercial status within the region. In certain aspects, the autonomy campaign is rooted in this competition. The autonomy proposals had more support in the North Peace than any other district in the Peace Country. Although Grande Prairie lawyer W.M. Eager and businessman L.C. Porteous campaigned on behalf of the autonomy movement, no large scale meetings devoted to the topic occurred in the Grande Prairie district and no association comparable to the Peace River Autonomy League formed at Falher existed.[97] In B.C., the autonomy issue received even less visible support. The reduced level of support in the Grande Prairie and Pouce Coupé country is related to the crusade to connect the Peace country with Prince Rupert which underlay the autonomy campaign. Both Page Rideout and Chas. Frederick supported the claim of Prince Rupert as the natural port of the Peace River Country and sought rail connection to this centre through Peace Pass. This proposal ran counter to the sentiment in the Grande Prairie and Pouce Coupé districts. If an outlet to Prince Rupert existed, Grande Prairie would lose any claims it had as a gateway to the Peace River country. Dawson Creek, moreover, sought to improve connections with the Lower Mainland of B.C., rather than open access to a northern port. The North Peace district also had another motive for autonomy which their counterparts around Grande Prairie and Dawson Creek did not share. The North Peace boosters perceived the north as their rightful hinterland and resented Edmonton's use of the Waterways route to access its mineral wealth.[98] They saw the autonomy campaign as another effort to establish a connection between their district and the northern mineral resource hinterland.

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[96] PAA, M.D. of Peace Papers, Acc. 71.336, file 54, E.L. Lamont to Norman Soars, Nov. 27, 1924.

[97] *Herald*, July 10, 1936 and July 24, 1936. *Record*, July 17, 1936 and July 24, 1936.

Work on the Peace Country, both academic and popular, makes no mention of the Provincehood movement. It is important to ask if it had wide support and what did it hope to accomplish? The greatest support for the autonomy movement could be found in the traditional boosting organisations -- the Boards of Trade, the town councils, and the local newspapers. These boosters had more at stake than publicity and blackmail. Their faith in the potential of their region led them to accept and believe in the proposal. Page Rideout believed the north was entitled to political autonomy, but did not know if it could be accomplished in 1927.[99] Although those organising the secession movement held little hope for its success, they did think that men of high calibre could be found to run a province in the North. They did truly want to separate from the capitals in the south because nothing of consequence came from Alberta or B.C.,[100] but they were few in number.

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[98] *Record*, March 19, 1937.

[99] *Record*, Dec. 2, 1927.

[100] PAA, Gauvreau Papers, Acc. 66.135, J13, Draft Article on Coast Outlet, 1933."

The reaction to the provincehood movement must be measured in small amounts. Did it have any impact? It is impossible to tell. The Edmonton Board of Trade, for example, wrote to Hugh Allen in 1928 to determine the northern position on sale of government railways, and offers support because it is unsure of its own stance on the issue.[101] In September 1928, the *Edmonton Journal* advocated the formation of a Northern Alberta Development Council to encourage northern development.[102] But would these attempts to reconcile the north have been undertaken if the secession movement had not occurred? Pierre Gauvreau certainly believed that the actions of Alberta in 1928 stopped the provincehood movement. They completed the auto highway to Edmonton, honeycombed the region with secondary roads, and Departmental officials acknowledged Peace River Board of Trade Resolutions. As well, both provincial governments began to conduct research and exploration of the territories in the north. He wrote, "There was a noticeable movement made by the province of Alberta, although this would not be officially admitted, but those in close touch with work in the various Boards of Trade throughout the country found some of their demands met with action instead of the careful and sympathetic consideration that had filled their filing cabinets previously."[103] The periodic reappearance of secession following the 1927 attempt can be read two ways. First the move succeeded in winning concessions, and thus was used again as a ploy. Second, the circumstances surrounding the secession movement never truly went away, and some individuals truly believed that autonomy was preferable to the status-quo.

The movement for provincial status demonstrates that both of these statements have validity. The hinterland response to metropolitan control of development played a significant role in the provincehood movement. The desire to have the region's interests taken into account in the legislatures of B.C. and Alberta is a constant theme in the rhetoric supporting autonomy. The coast outlet railway is the most important issue in this regard, and few in the Peace Country believed that the railway could be constructed without assistance from the Dominion. Thus support for the provincehood movement remained lukewarm. When minor concessions appeared forthcoming in 1928, the cries for autonomy disappeared. It seems reasonable that faced with economic hardship during the Depression some individuals would retreat to a modestly successful tactic. It is clear, however, that metropolitanism was not the sole factor behind the provincehood movement. A few people in the Peace Country were serious about the proposal and stood by it. Boosterism, at a regional and at a community level, helps to explain their position more clearly. The growth ethic and unchallenged belief in the potential of the Peace Country led these individuals to seek autonomy as the plan for increased development. These individuals, including key figures like Page Rideout and Chas. Frederick sincerely believed that the interests of their district would be better served through provincial status. The key individuals in the Peace Country did not fall into one category or another. They shared a common belief that the metropolitan relationship was detrimental, and a common faith in their region's unbounded potential. Indeed, these two ideas compounded each other. Faith in the region's potential led the residents to look for causes for their malaise. Edmonton and Vancouver were simple targets to find.

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[101] PAA, Allen Papers, Acc. 75.188, file 63, John Blue to Hugh Allen, November 1, 1928.

[102] *Record*, November 23, 1928 is sceptical.

[103] Draft Article on Coast Outlet, 1933" P.R. Gauvreau Papers, PAA, Acc. 66.135, J13.

Conclusion

Unjigah plays many important roles in understanding the Peace River regional identity. The Euro-Canadian settlers who came to live in its watershed accepted the river into their lives. From its origins in the Rocky Mountain trench to its delta on the northwestern edge of Lake Athabasca, the Peace River is a powerful visual symbol of the regional landscape. The Peace Riverites lived in the "Land of the Mighty Peace," and looked upon its splendour with joy and amazement. Few doubted that the land through which Unjigah flowed contained unsurpassed treasures. The river is also a metaphor for the process of settlement and agricultural development. The settlers, like the river, both modified and adapted to the landscape as they transformed the region from wilderness garden to agricultural home. Furthermore, the settlers used the river for transportation and at the same time struggled to overcome the intra-regional transportation barrier it represented. They wondered at its economic potential as a source of electrical energy and a tourist attraction. The Peace River thus encompassed the three elements of Peace River regional identity: imagery; environment; and pioneer-hinterland culture. It had unsurpassed aesthetic beauty. It was an environmental phenomenon representing opportunity, yet requiring accommodation. And, it symbolised the potential wealth of the region and its residents.

Historians and geographers have long struggled to understand regional identity. In Canada, working within the framework of "limited identities," historians in the last two decades have made even greater efforts to understand this issue. Most, however, have sought an identity which is incomplete. The "limited" nature of the regional identity always led them to consider region in relation to nation, gender or class. By looking at identity as layered rather than limited, this thesis has portrayed the Peace River regional identity in a new way. First, regional identity had temporal, environmental and cultural characteristics. Second, while it was an autonomous identity associated with the regional landscape, it remains just one layer of a complex individual identity. Third, the regional identity, itself, contains layers of associations and experiences. In order to understand regional identity in this fashion, the thesis brought together the elements of imagery, environment, and culture. In other words, it combined the insights of such distinctive writers as: regional scholars Gerald Friesen, Frederick Leubke, and Janine Brodie; intellectual historians Henry Nash Smith, Doug Owram, and R. Douglas Francis; and new environmental historians Paul Voisey, Donald Worster, and Richard White. In this manner, a portrait of the regional layer of identity has emerged.

The imagined region created by the southern booster community included both aesthetic and utilitarian qualities. The reports by railway surveyors, the Geological Survey of Canada, Dominion Lands surveyors, and Peace River boosters and speculators all provided spectacular descriptions and vivid portraits of the Peace River valley and the parkland plateaux so unexpected at fifty-five degrees north latitude. Their true purpose, however, was to create an image of the Peace River region as a potentially wealthy agricultural frontier. To this end, the reports suggested that 20 million acres of fertile land existed in the region, that the climate was suitable for wheat growing, and that the majority of the Peace River region consisted of open parkland prairies. The imagined region, consequently, consisted of a thriving agricultural community living in a splendid, overpowering, eden-like landscape.

Most settlers coming to the Peace River region after 1910 accepted the image. They dwelled upon the region's beauty. Few settlers forgot the "most wonderful sight, where the Smoky joins the Peace,"[1] but other areas of the Peace River region also inspired the new settlers. Maud Clifford, for example, recalled:

> the wonderful view of the Grande Prairie that was obtained at the "Nate-en-now" (Cree for "the end of the hill") on the old-time trail from Spirit River. Once seen it could never be forgotten. The Rockies in the distance, the clumps of brush here and there giving the impression that just behind each there must be a homestead. One was almost waiting for the curl of blue smoke to ascend to mark the human habitation. So far as the eye could reach not a sign of life. Nothing but the faint impression of a winding trail leading we knew not just where ...[2]

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[1] GMA, Loggie Collection, M 4560, file 12, Diary of Dr. L.A. Bagnall (1912).

[2] GMA, Loggie Collection, M 4560, file 1, Maud Clifford to Albright, April 22, 1930.

The fertile landscape appeared endless to many. "We have come to the conclusion that God made a lot of outdoors," noted the editor of the *Peace River Record*, "and a lot of it seems to be in this country."[3] Settlers, however, sought prosperity and wealth, and were not fooled by aesthetic or romantic notions of a garden. The first settlers came to the region only when it appeared a railway would be completed and later waves of settlement occurred following the introduction of early maturing wheat varieties and bumper crops.

The utilitarian and aesthetic image of the Peace River country became the framework through which settlers interacted with the environment. The Peace River environment did not fit the image which had been created. Thick forest, a short growing season, and variable soils all greeted the settlers. Early settlers concentrated upon the open grasslands of the prairies, and as a result, isolated islands of settlement emerged in the region. Between these disconnected islands, vast stretches of aspen, willow, and spruce forest interfered with the settlement process. Few farmers could carve out a commercially viable farm in these districts without assistance. W.D. Albright summarised the feelings of many Peace River pioneers. "Twenty-two years' [sic] experience in a pioneer neighbourhood," he wrote, "has convinced me that the free-homestead policy of the past was a costly mistake, its only justification being that we did not know a better way."[4] The settlers understood that success required adaptation and they demanded a planned and assisted settlement process.

The new farm community soon learned that successful agricultural production also required adaptation to the new environment. Early pioneers had practised a subsistence based mixed-farm system, but the settlement community planned to create a commercial economy based upon ranching and wheat production. Limited water supplies and the long winter feeding period in many districts, however, made ranching uneconomic, and traditional wheat varieties such as Marquis regularly failed to mature in the region. Peace

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[3] *Record*, August 16, 1929.

[4] W.D. Albright, "An Economic Land-Settlement Policy," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* II (November 1936), 550.

River farmers thus experimented with new wheat varieties, coarse grains and fodder crops, agricultural techniques, and small scale livestock production. Adaptations led to success, and slowly, a viable mixed-farm economy emerged in the region with significant intra-regional variation.

The long process of adaptation to the environment resulted in an enduring pioneer quality in the Peace River region. Settlers continued to enter the district through World War II, and single men remained an important element of the community. Farms remained small with limited acreage in production, and urban merchants remained completely dependent upon servicing the agricultural economy. Few were satisfied with this modest economic existence. The regional identity remained speculative and booster oriented. They sought windfall economic opportunities, and, in an effort to overcome the pioneer perspective, boosters emphasised the symbols of a modern society such as schools, hospitals, libraries, drama and music festivals, and sporting events.

The Peace River region was not only a pioneer community, it was also a hinterland community. Fulfilling the image of the region as a prosperous agricultural garden required a transportation system. On this issue, the Peace River settlers relied upon the metropolitan community. Peace River boosters believed the region had a natural role as a nodal region between south-east, south-west, and north. As such, they demanded that Edmonton and Vancouver assist them in building this transportation system. The problems they encountered creating a transportation network which reflected this perception led to regionalism and protest. This protest, it must be remembered is only one aspect of the regional layer of identity.

This thesis has not explored all of the layers which exist in the Peace River regional identity. Further study is needed in the areas of social organisation and the expression of regional sentiment in literature and art. By exploring image making, settlement, agriculture, economy, transportation and communication, and regionalism, however, it has introduced the key components of the regional identity complex. When people near Grande Prairie, Dawson Creek, or Fairview called themselves a Peace Riverite during the settlement period (1910 to 1946), the identity they referred to consisted of all of these elements. They referred to the spectacular beauty of the river valley and the parkland prairies. They referred to the potential prosperity that awaited the successful pioneer and the untapped resource potential which awaited the speculator. They referred to the struggle against the landscape as they attempted to carve out a farm in the region. They referred to the constant adaptation of agricultural practice and technique. They referred to the isolation and the long struggle to create the proper and just transportation system. And finally, they referred to the metropolitan-hinterland relationship. All of these points formed a part of the regional layer of identity.

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Appendix 1

A Note on Statistics

The statistical data presented in the charts and maps in this thesis was obtained primarily from the *Census of Canada*, and the *Census of the Prairie Provinces*. The nature of the published census returns presented certain problems to the presentation of statistical evidence. First, the Census reporting districts changed between 1901 and 1951. In the Census of Alberta prior to 1921, the Census district encompassing the Peace River region included all territory in Alberta north of a line between Edmonton and Jasper. During this period, only those limited statistics reported at a township level could be used for the study. From 1921 to 1951, the Census reports become more useful as consistent Census Divisions were established and patterns of information could be followed easily. In British Columbia, similar problems existed. The Peace River region was included in a reporting district which encompassed the Yale, Cariboo, Omineca, and Peace River areas until 1931. In the 1931 to 1951 period, the Peace River country represented the only agricultural land in B.C. Census Division 10.

Inconsistency of the Census Divisions was only one problem presented by the Census information. In Alberta, portions of the Peace River country were included in Census Division 15, Census Division 16, and Census Division 17. Of these, only Census Division 16 included territory exclusively within the Peace River region. (See Appendix 3, Map 27). While intra-divisional breakdowns of information for Census Division 15 and 16 often existed, they do not appear for Division 17 prior to 1941. Since Division 17 represented the fringe of settlement often containing less than 100 farms, I chose to exclude it from most statistical calculations. A further problem emerged with the coordination of information from British Columbia and Alberta. Throughout the period of study, the Census reported for Alberta in five year intervals, but maintained the traditional ten year interval for British Columbia. A much more accurate illustration of trends could thus be created by using information exclusive to Alberta. British Columbia data, consequently, is often isolated from other data in the figures and maps. Since these problems call the precise accuracy of the statistical information into question, figures and maps have been used predominantly rather than tables. Most figures specify the Census Division to which the information pertains. Those which claim to illustrate trends for the Peace River region in five year intervals reflect the information gathered from Census Division 15 and 16 in Alberta.

Supplementary data, especially regarding homesteading, was obtained from the *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior*, *Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Lands and Mines*, *Annual Report of the Alberta Department of Agriculture*, and *Annual Report of the British Columbia Department of Lands*. This information forms the basis for those figures related to homesteading, and the maps examining the spread of settlement in the Peace River region. This statistical data, like that of the Census, was difficult to coordinate between British Columbia and Alberta jurisdictions. Maps which illustrated information on both sides of the border were especially difficult to obtain. As a result, most information reflects the trends found in the Alberta sections of the Peace River region.

Appendix 2

Figures and Tables

TABLE 1

Cultivated Land in the Peace Region
(area in acres)

Census Div. 15

	1916	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946
Summerfallow		3509	11902	26295	53161	72091	60319
Spring Wheat	1859	1285	10959	41342	39121	64739	87596
Barley	2653	1832	2329	4353	6258	17257	16098
Oats	7235	18302	23002	57637	50850	59308	64449
Rye	78	368	272	94	263	185	73
Other Grain & Flax	6	14	247	247	501	3712	715
Cultivated Hay	809	3504	2432	3172	7753	13413	32042
Other Forage		1771	1909	3580	5875	3197	4077
Potatoes & Roots	258	335	323	656	798	706	500
Others			4		2		
Fall Wheat	0	132	30		154	14	
Total Cultivated Area	12898	31052	53409	137376	164736	234622	265869

Census Div. 16

	1916	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946
Summerfallow		61898	77468	138742	209799	298160	277863
Spring Wheat	20348	58137	128148	305922	278747	307903	355293
Barley	3441	11127	5383	9300	22097	33702	25134
Oats	27586	84690	73001	150206	189782	213314	253909
Rye	11	1476	1991	1905	1712	2070	3258
Other Grain & Flax	389	537	267	712	778	8365	4626
Cultivated Hay	2140	5339	7999	8881	23985	30256	53101
Forage		8176	4970	12837	14411	8718	11272
Potatoes & Roots	262	688	493	1578	1626	1268	1023
Other crops		8	1		1	4	300
Fall Wheat	291	411	587		6403	3127	
Total Cultivated Area	54468	232487	300308	630083	749341	906887	985779

Table 2

Farms

	1921	1931	1941	1951
M.D. 739	528	657	628	513
M.D. 740	425	632	585	527
M.D. 829	234	437	356	383
M.D. 857	412	461	461	441
M.D. 858	540	549	520	447
I.D. 770	106	317	275	231
I.D. 771	392	575	491	385
I.D. 796	299	679	584	576
I.D. 738	13	149	201	197
I.D. 797	15	213	195	266
I.D. 830	29	272	256	325
I.D. 859	12	213	214	255
B.C. South	u.a.	754	1084	993

Acres/Farm

	1921	1931	1941	1951
M.D. 739	282	334	343	427
M.D. 740	344	305	364	417
M.D. 829	228	253	346	384
M.D. 857	213	328	370	406
M.D. 858	229	337	402	489
I.D. 770	195	202	298	345
I.D. 771	187	218	283	348
I.D. 796	206	228	289	375
I.D. 738	222	240	274	309
I.D. 797	217	225	269	354
I.D. 830	243	191	299	322
I.D. 859	627	201	251	392
B.C. South	u.a.	284	338	411

Improved Acres/Farm

	1921	1931	1941	1951
M.D. 739	82	144	179	249
M.D. 740	160	185	235	284
M.D. 829	74	108	176	228
M.D. 857	63	179	217	260
M.D. 858	76	183	237	316
I.D. 770	68	57	120	193
I.D. 771	34	83	147	213
I.D. 796	42	103	169	247
I.D. 738	19	28	65	121
I.D. 797	9	21	74	189
I.D. 830	25	27	90	165
I.D. 859	10	34	98	166
B.C. South	u.a.	83	111	177

Percentage of Farm Land Improved

	1921	1931	1941	1951
M.D. 739	29%	43%	52%	58%
M.D. 740	47%	61%	65%	68%
M.D. 829	32%	42%	51%	59%
M.D. 857	29%	55%	59%	64%
M.D. 858	33%	54%	59%	65%
I.D. 770	35%	28%	40%	56%
I.D. 771	18%	38%	52%	61%
I.D. 796	20%	45%	58%	66%
I.D. 738	9%	12%	24%	39%
I.D. 797	4%	9%	27%	54%
I.D. 830	10%	14%	30%	51%
I.D. 859	2%	17%	39%	42%
B.C. South	u.a.	29%	33%	43%

Table 3

Farm Machinery

Trucks

	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	1.8%	7.3%	7.3%	13.7%	19.4%	42.4%
Census Div. 15	0.6%	1.7%	1.9%	6.1%	11.3%	32.6%
Census Div. 16	0.5%	2.8%	2.3%	5.9%	10.6%	29.6%
Census Div. 10	u.a.	5.2%	u.a.	5.8%	u.a.	39.3%

Tractors

	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	13.3%	22.6%	22.9%	34.5%	50.5%	77.5%
Census Div. 15	5.5%	10.8%	10.2%	17.2%	36.1%	66.0%
Census Div. 16	6.2%	13.4%	13.5%	23.4%	40.5%	74.3%
Census Div. 10	u.a.	8.6%	u.a.	9.4%	u.a.	65.6%

Automobiles

	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	35.5%	42.1%	37.6%	42.8%	45.7%	52.7%
Census Div. 15	10.3%	15.0%	11.3%	15.6%	19.5%	27.5%
Census Div. 16	11.8%	23.9%	21.9%	28.1%	33.6%	42.6%
Census Div. 10	u.a.	18.6%	u.a.	12.3%	u.a.	26.5%

Threshers

	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	u.a.	13%	12%	13%	14%	17%
Census Div. 15	u.a.	5%	6%	7%	11%	14%
Census Div. 16	u.a.	7%	8%	11%	12%	14%
Census Div. 10	u.a.	5%	u.a.	7%	u.a.	12%

Combines

	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	u.a.	2.5%	2.8%	4.9%	11.4%	23.2%
Census Div. 15	u.a.	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	2.7%	14.9%
Census Div. 16	u.a.	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%	3.6%	19.4%
Census Div. 10	u.a.	0.2%	u.a.	0.0%	u.a.	14.3%

Binders

	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946	1951
Alberta	u.a.	62.7%	63.7%	u.a.	66.4%	63.6%
Census Div. 15	u.a.	25.8%	34.1%	u.a.	55.3%	51.3%
Census Div. 16	u.a.	40.5%	51.5%	u.a.	67.3%	64.2%
Census Div. 10	u.a.	32.7%	u.a.	u.a.	u.a.	56.3%

Table 4

Statistical Data for Census Division 16

	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946
Total Area in acres	7104000	7104000	7104000	7104000	7104000	7104000
Number of Farms	3578	2796	6977	6522	6395	5764
Area Occupied by Farms	879945	857154	1804418	1864056	2066907	2047048
Percentage of Division Farmed	12.39%	12.07%	25.40%	26.24%	29.09%	28.82%
Average area/farm in acres	245.9	306.6	258.6	285.8	323.2	355.1
Farms of 1-50 acres	18	15	42	60	38	40
Farms of 51-100 acres	30		34	67	55	43
Farms of 51-160 acres		1273				
Farms of 101-200 acres	2418		4387	3355	2696	2028
Farms of 201-299 acres	99		135	142	163	136
Farms of 161-320 acres		858				
Farms of over 300 acres	1013					
Farms of 300-479 acres			1474	1773	1963	1947
Farms of 321-480 acres		378				
Farms of 480-639 acres			521	654	804	818
Farms of 481-640 acres		169				
Farms of over 640 acres		103	384	471	676	752
Owner operated farms	3049	1955	6020	4984	4252	3825
Manager operated farms	12	12	4	10	20	11
Tenant operated farms	207	239	295	533	649	566
Owner/Tenant operated	310	590	658	975	1474	1362
Acreage owner oper.	670684	491490	1383453	1238368	1127625	1104263
Acreage manager oper.	21174	3014	1111	2651	9250	4166
Acreage tenant oper.	75472	82138	97987	152969	189820	182989
Acreage owner/tenant oper.	112615	280512	321867	470068	740172	755680
Total acreage owned	754465	629138	1556891	1487848	1523505	1513180
Total acreage rented	125480	228016	247527	376208	543402	533868

Table 5

Urban Rural Ethnicity in 1941

	British	French	W. European	E. European	Scandinavian	Other
Urban	3785	614	615	284	512	695
Division 15 rural	5000	3804	1540	1945	1013	1487
Division 16 rural	11425	1404	4568	4768	3423	600
Division 10 rural	4065	364	1069	503	893	333

Table 6
Farm Finance

Farm Value in Div. 15

	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946
Land	$2,065,170	$1,630,550	$5,029,900	$3,707,200	$4,039,900	$6,320,200
Buildings	$641,094	$520,575	$1,355,900	$1,324,600	$1,659,000	$2,332,900
Machinery	$477,632	$554,065	$1,504,100	$1,091,700	$1,634,200	$2,769,000
Livestock	$891,409	$663,948	$1,076,541	$925,509	$1,579,429	$1,697,574
Total	$4,075,305	$3,369,138	$8,966,441	$7,049,009	$8,912,529	$13,119,674
Total Farms	937	818	2880	2606	2780	2406
Avg./Farm	$4,349.31	$4,118.75	$3,113.35	$2,704.92	$3,205.95	$5,452.90
Avg./Acre	$18.91	$15.53	$14.24	$11.20	$12.40	$18.24

Farm Value in Div. 16

	1921	1926	1931	1936	1941	1946
Land	$11,583,066	$8,629,204	$19,822,200	$15,027,500	$15,932,200	$22,738,700
Buildings	$2,558,595	$2,195,425	$4,923,100	$4,688,200	$5,473,500	$8,153,800
Machinery	$2,327,165	$2,191,803	$5,397,800	$4,013,600	$5,993,200	$8,500,700
Livestock	$4,082,703	$2,257,802	$3,446,745	$3,557,035	$4,217,585	$4,096,716
Total	$20,551,529	$15,274,234	$33,589,845	$27,286,335	$31,616,485	$43,489,916
Total Farms	3578	2796	6977	6522	6395	5764
Avg./farm	$5,743.86	$5,462.89	$4,814.37	$4,183.74	$4,943.94	$7,545.09
Avg./Acre	$23.36	$17.82	$18.62	$14.64	$15.30	$21.25

Farm Expenses in Div. 15

	1920	1925	1930	1935	1940	1945
Feed	$43,048	$22,983	$30,890	$55,520	$134,170	$107,810
Fertiliser	$148	$387	$10	$190	$470	$4,200
seed	$23,108	$14,374	$30,520	$60,170	$61,120	$160,340
labour	$84,138	$70,417	$145,860	$118,100	$150,610	$224,590
taxes			$101,490	$77,040	$99,030	$110,950
All others			$144	$218,770	$734,930	$1,651,470
Fuel				$38,580	$89,060	$259,970
Farm Equip.					$169,770	$777,030
Custom Work					$190,690	$329,130
Rent				$5,150	$150,610	$158,310
Other			$144	$175,040	$134,800	$127,030
Total	$150,442	$108,161	$308,914	$529,790	$1,180,330	$2,259,360
Avg./farm	$161	$132	$107	$203	$425	$939

Farm Expenses in Div. 16

	1920	1925	1930	1935	1940	1945
Feed	$156,976	$106,104	$60,320	$78,790	$80,000	$291,980
Fertiliser	$310	$333	$410	$2,210	$5,090	$18,800
Seed	$104,356	$37,387	$104,560	$117,940	$96,800	$418,950
Labour	$322,821	$174,244	$753,330	$550,430	$756,110	$736,290
Taxes			$298,940	$260,850	$343,110	$374,630
All Others			$2,190	$1,150,930	$3,135,450	$4,324,720
Fuel				$151,010	$334,890	$720,940
Farm Equip.					$857,750	$1,788,890
Custom Work					$833,730	$786,800
Rent				$17,650	$756,110	$522,400
Other			$2,190	$982,270	$352,970	$505,690
Total	$584,463	$318,068	$1,219,750	$2,161,150	$4,416,560	$6,165,370
Avg./farm	$163	$114	$175	$331	$691	$1,070

Figure 1

Farms Reporting Revenue By Source, 1940

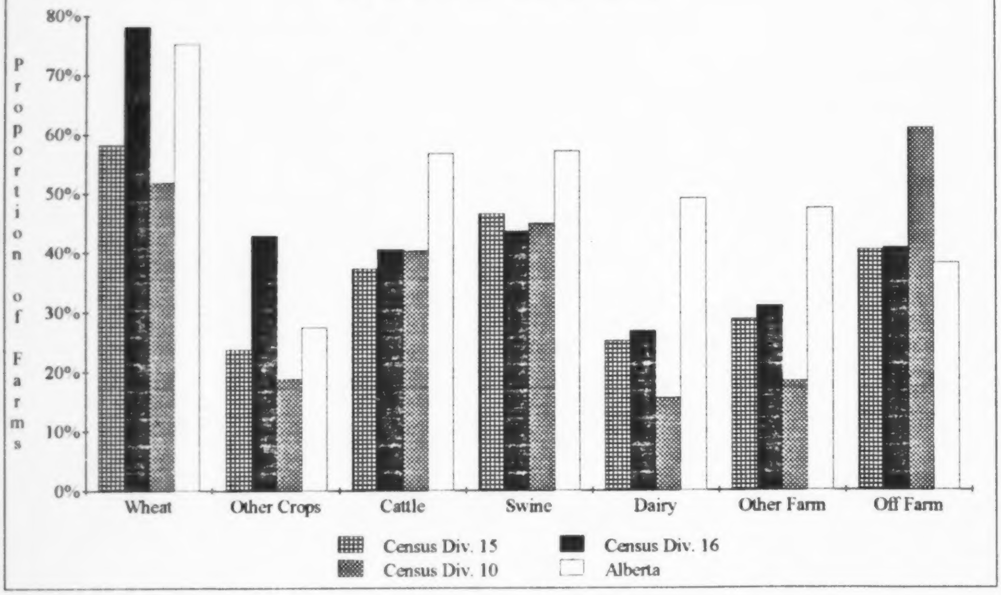


Figure 2

Revenue/Farm by Source, 1940

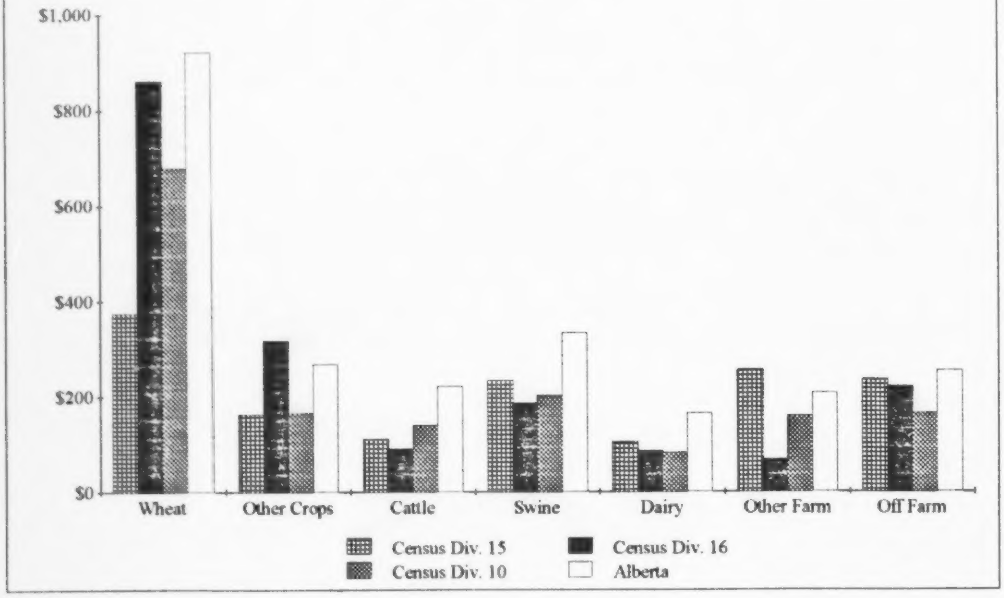
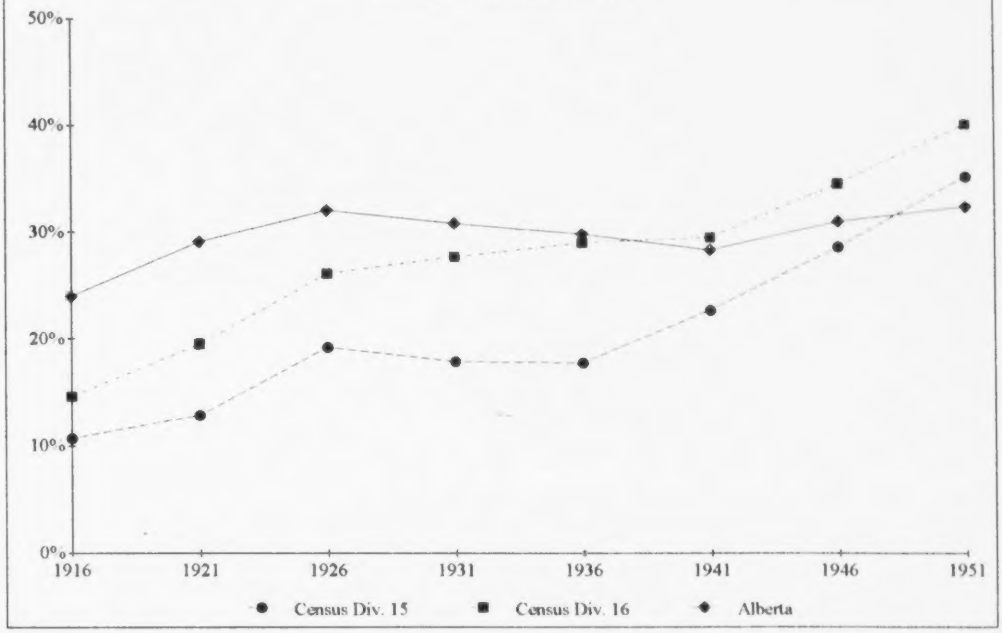


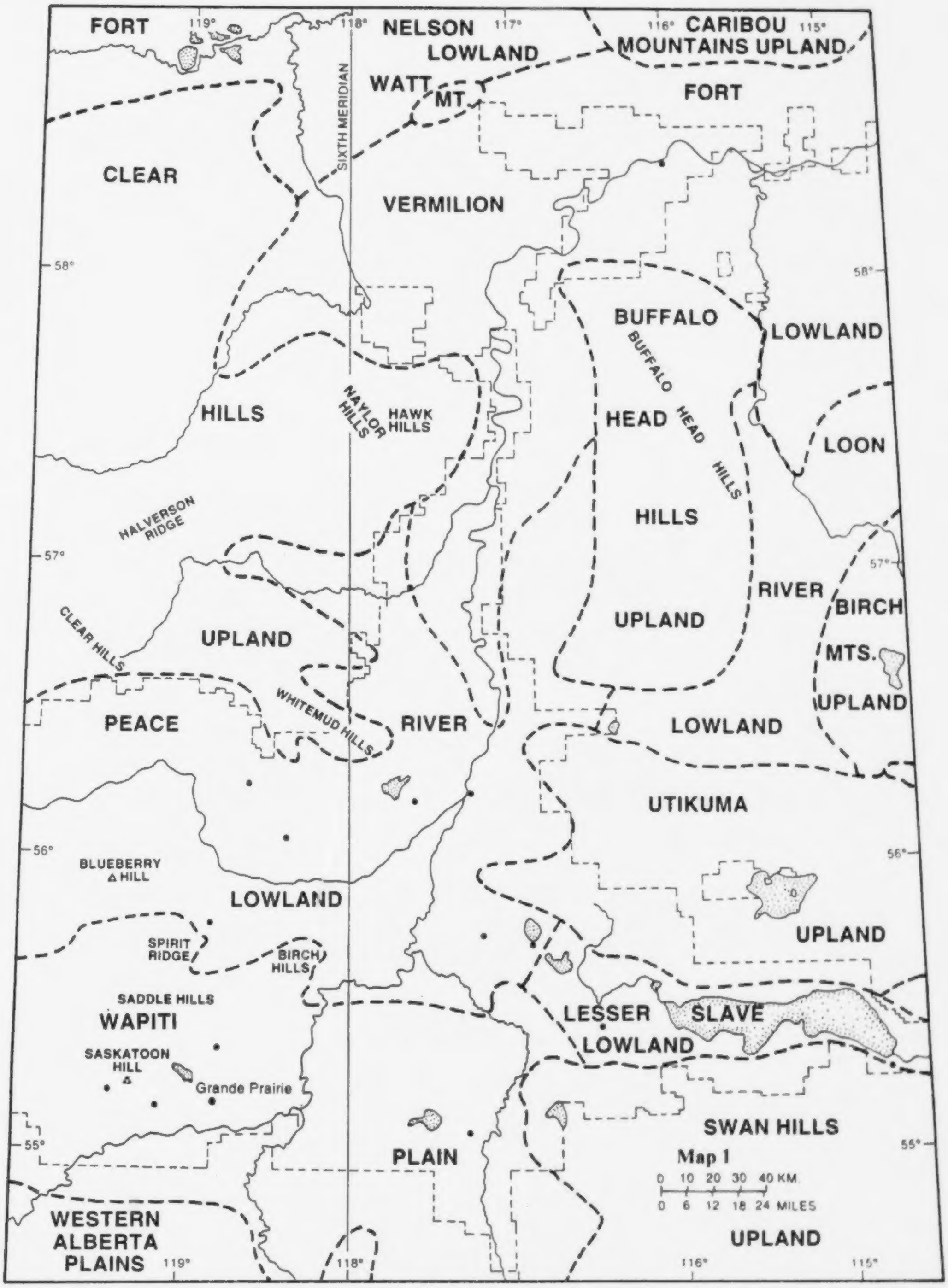
Figure 3

Percentage of Farm Land in Crops



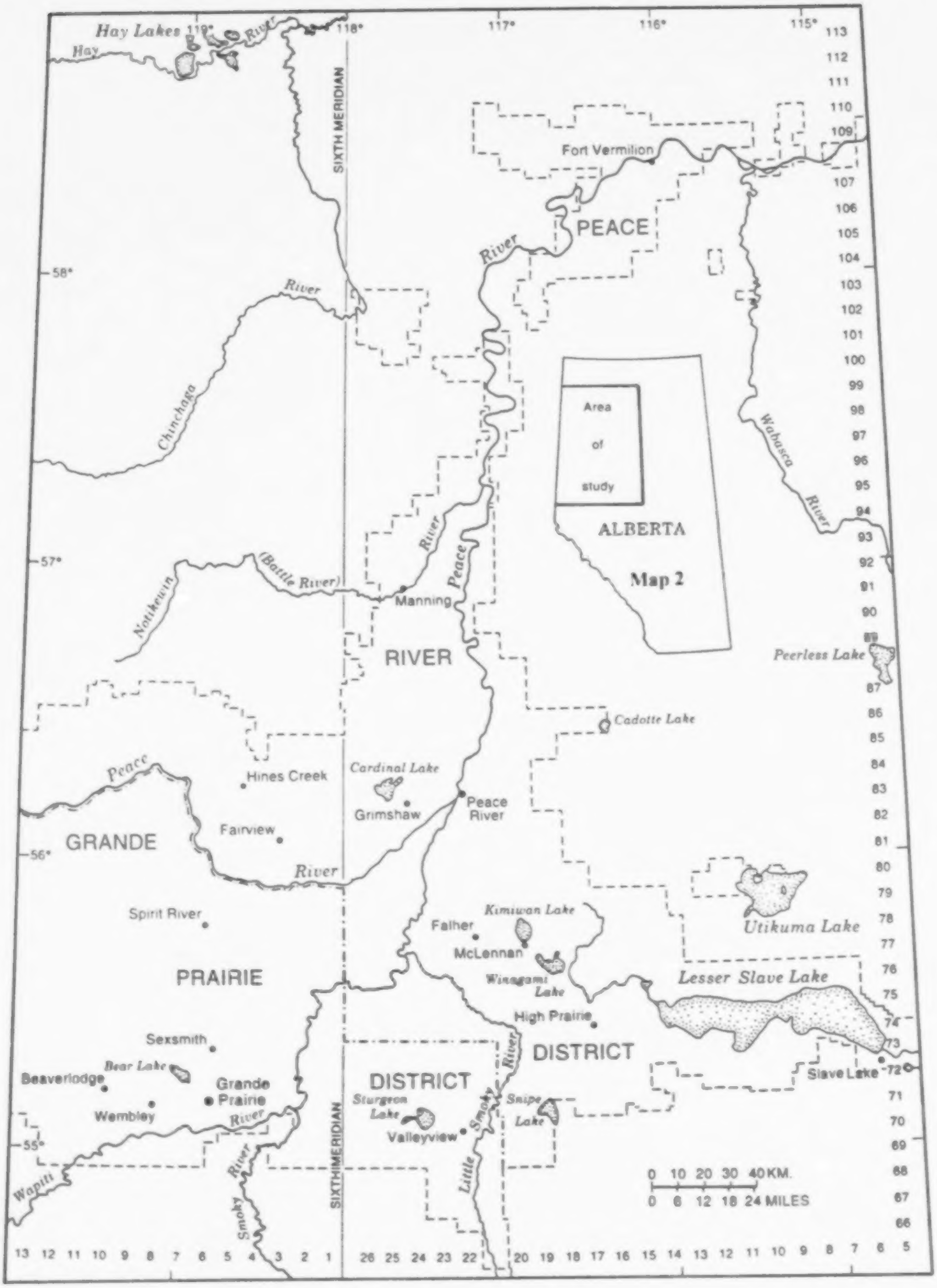
Appendix 3

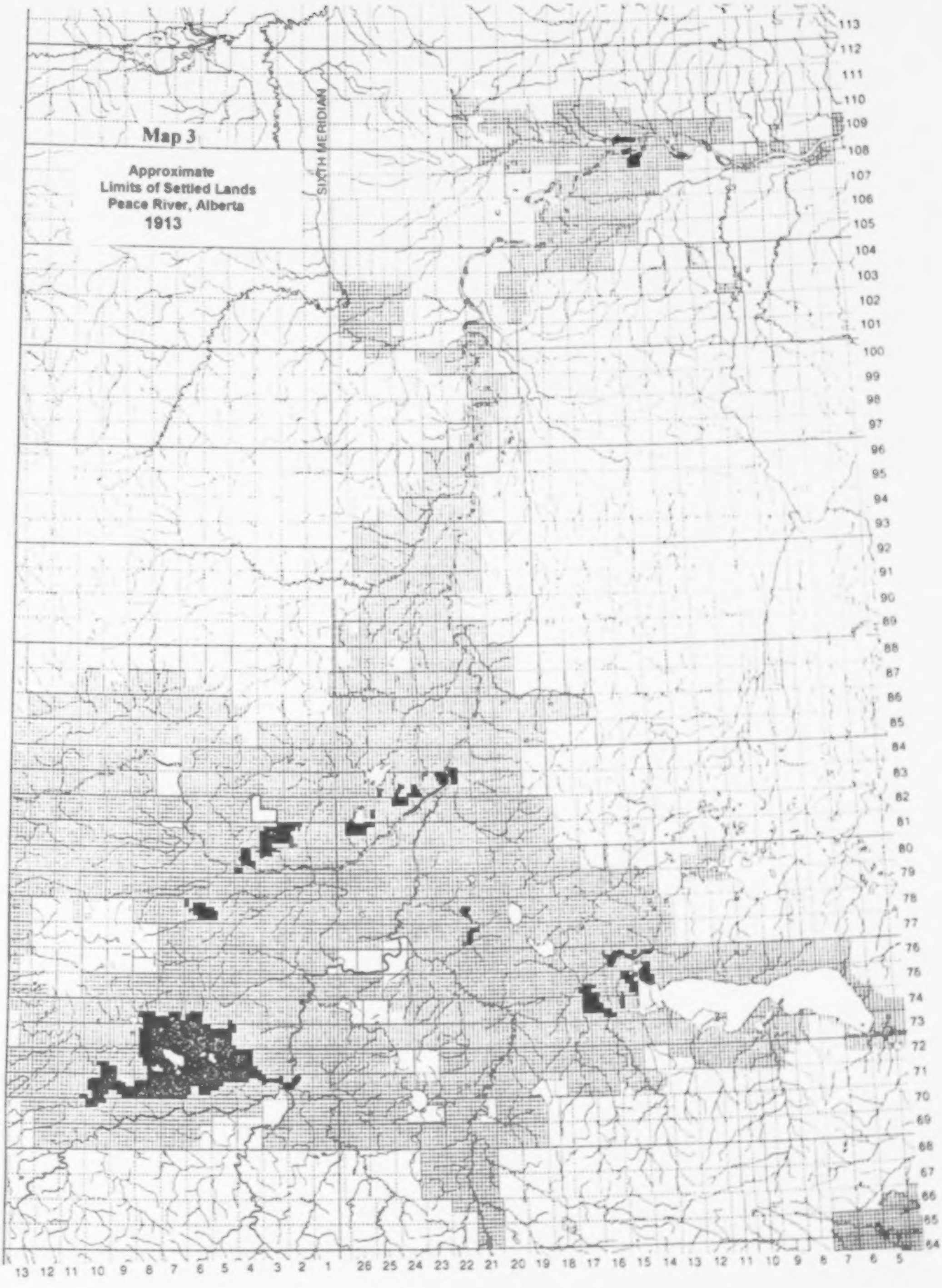
Maps



Map 1

FORT NELSON LOWLAND
CARIBOU MOUNTAINS UPLAND
WATT MT.
FORT VERMILION LOWLAND
CLEAR HILLS UPLAND
SIXTH MERIDIAN
BUFFALO HEAD HILLS UPLAND
BUFFALO HEAD HILLS
NAYLOR HILLS
HAWK HILLS
LOON RIVER LOWLAND
HALVERSON RIDGE
CLEAR HILLS
BIRCH MTS. UPLAND
WHITEMUD HILLS
PEACE RIVER LOWLAND
UTIKUMA UPLAND
BLUEBERRY HILL
SPIRIT RIDGE
BIRCH HILLS
SADDLE HILLS
WAPITI PLAIN
SASKATOON HILL
Grande Prairie
LESSER SLAVE LOWLAND
SWAN HILLS UPLAND
WESTERN ALBERTA PLAINS
119°
118°
117°
116°
115°
58°
57°
56°
55°
0 10 20 30 40 KM.
0 6 12 18 24 MILES


Hay Lakes
Hay
River
119°
118°
117°
116°
115°
SIXTH MERIDIAN
Fort Vermilion
PEACE
River
58°
River
Chinchaga
Area of study
ALBERTA
Map 2
Wabasca River
57°
Notikewin
(Battle River)
River
Peace
Manning
RIVER
Peerless Lake
Cadotte Lake
Peace
Hines Creek
Cardinal Lake
Grimshaw
Peace River
GRANDE
56°
Fairview
River
Utikuma Lake
Spirit River
Kimiwan Lake
Falher
McLennan
Winagami Lake
PRAIRIE
Lesser Slave Lake
High Prairie
DISTRICT
Sexsmith
Bear Lake
Beaverlodge
Grande Prairie
Wembley
River
DISTRICT
Sturgeon Lake
Valleyview
Smoky River
Snipe Lake
Slave Lake
55°
Wapiti
River
Smoky
SIXTHMERIDIAN
Little Smoky
0 10 20 30 40 KM.
0 6 12 18 24 MILES
113 112 111 110 109 107 106 105 104 103 102 101 100 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75 74 73 72 71 70 69 68 67 66
13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 26 25 24 23 22 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5



Map 3

Approximate
Limits of Settled Lands
Peace River, Alberta
1913

SIXTH MERIDIAN
113
112
111
110
109
108
107
106
105
104
103
102
101
100
99
98
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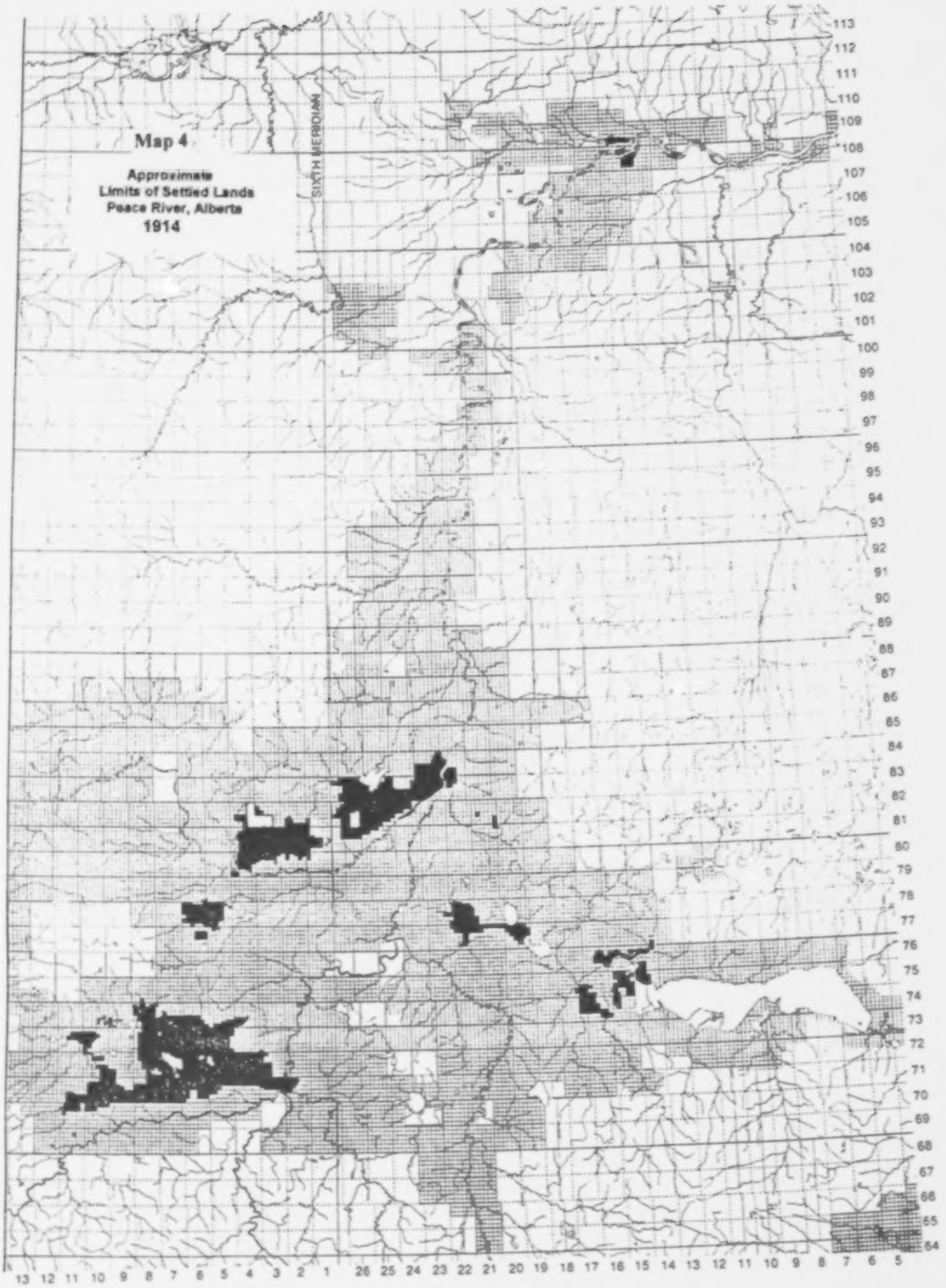
64
13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5



Map 4

Approximate
Limits of Settled Lands
Peace River, Alberta
1914

SIXTH MERIDIAN
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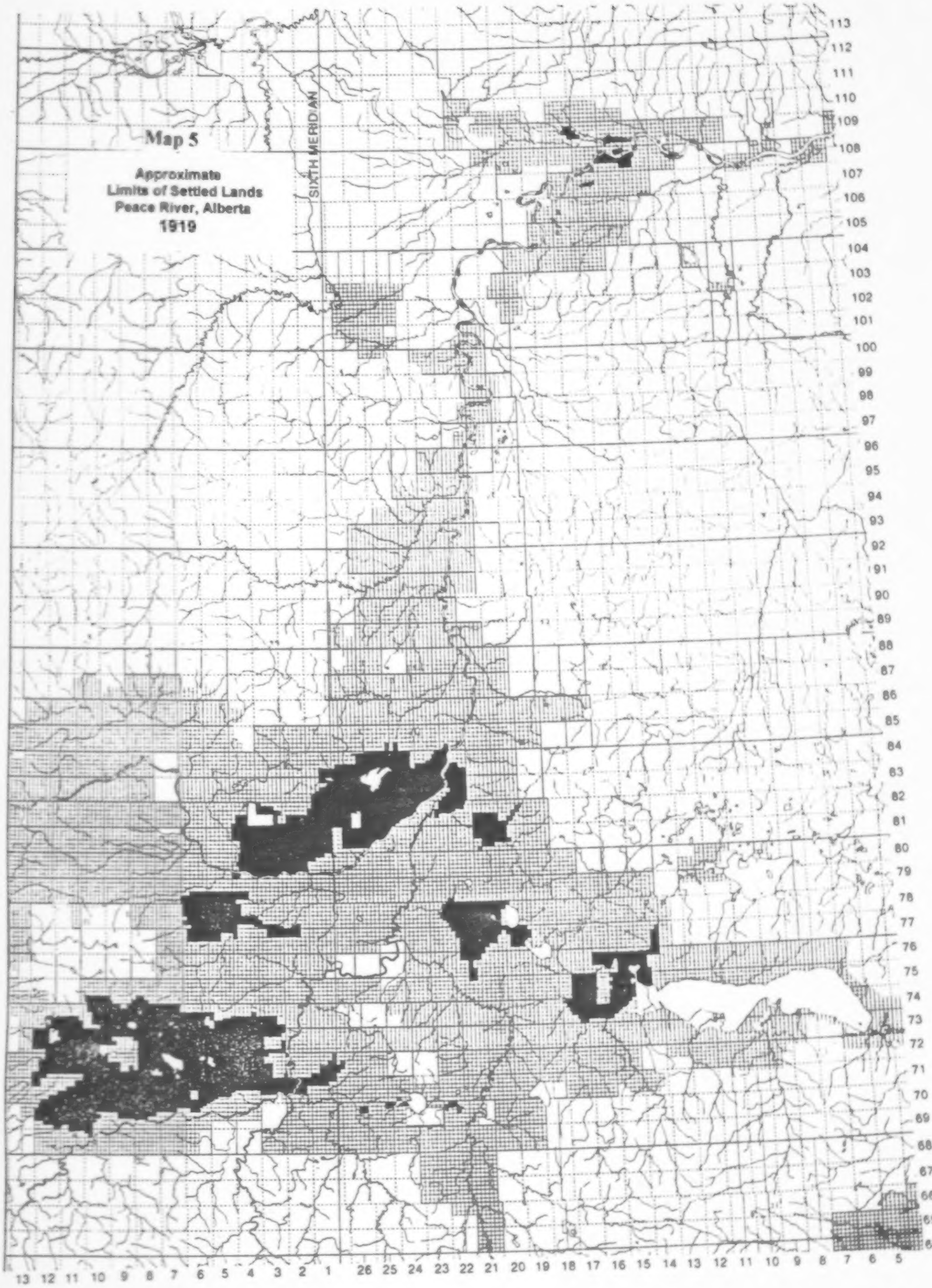
65
64
13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5



Map 5

Approximate
Limits of Settled Lands
Peace River, Alberta
1919

SIXTH MERIDIAN
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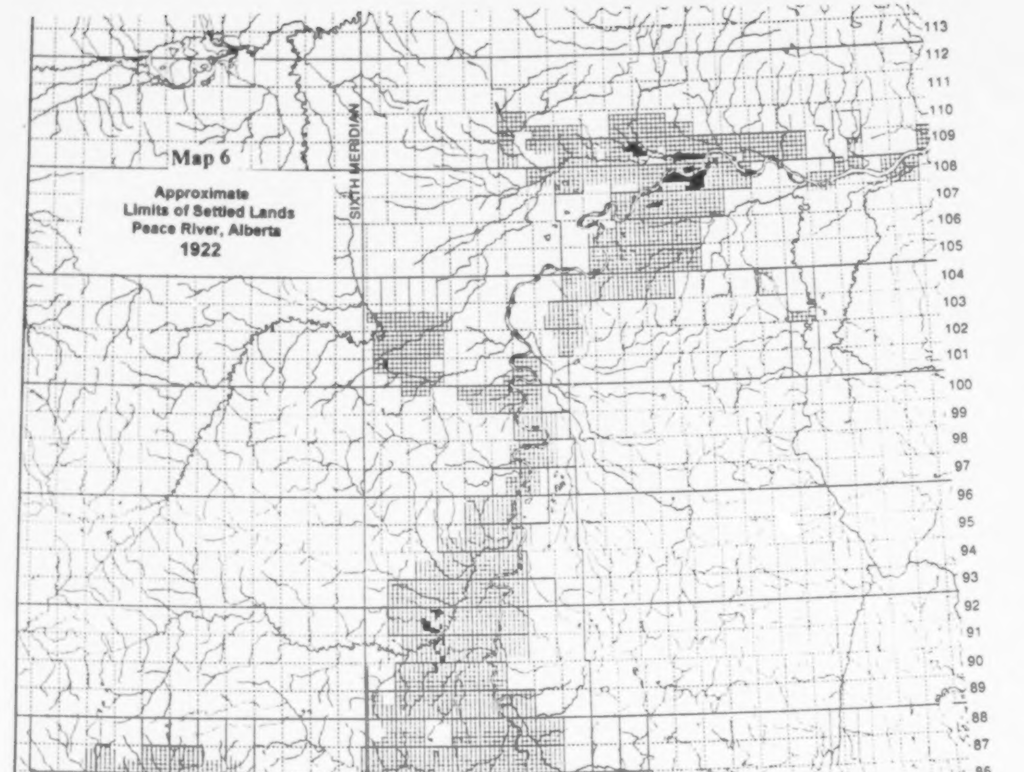
64
13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5



Map 6

Approximate
Limits of Settled Lands
Peace River, Alberta
1922

SIXTH MERIDIAN
113
112
111
110
109
108
107
106
105
104
103
102
101
100
99
98
97
96
95
94
93
92
91
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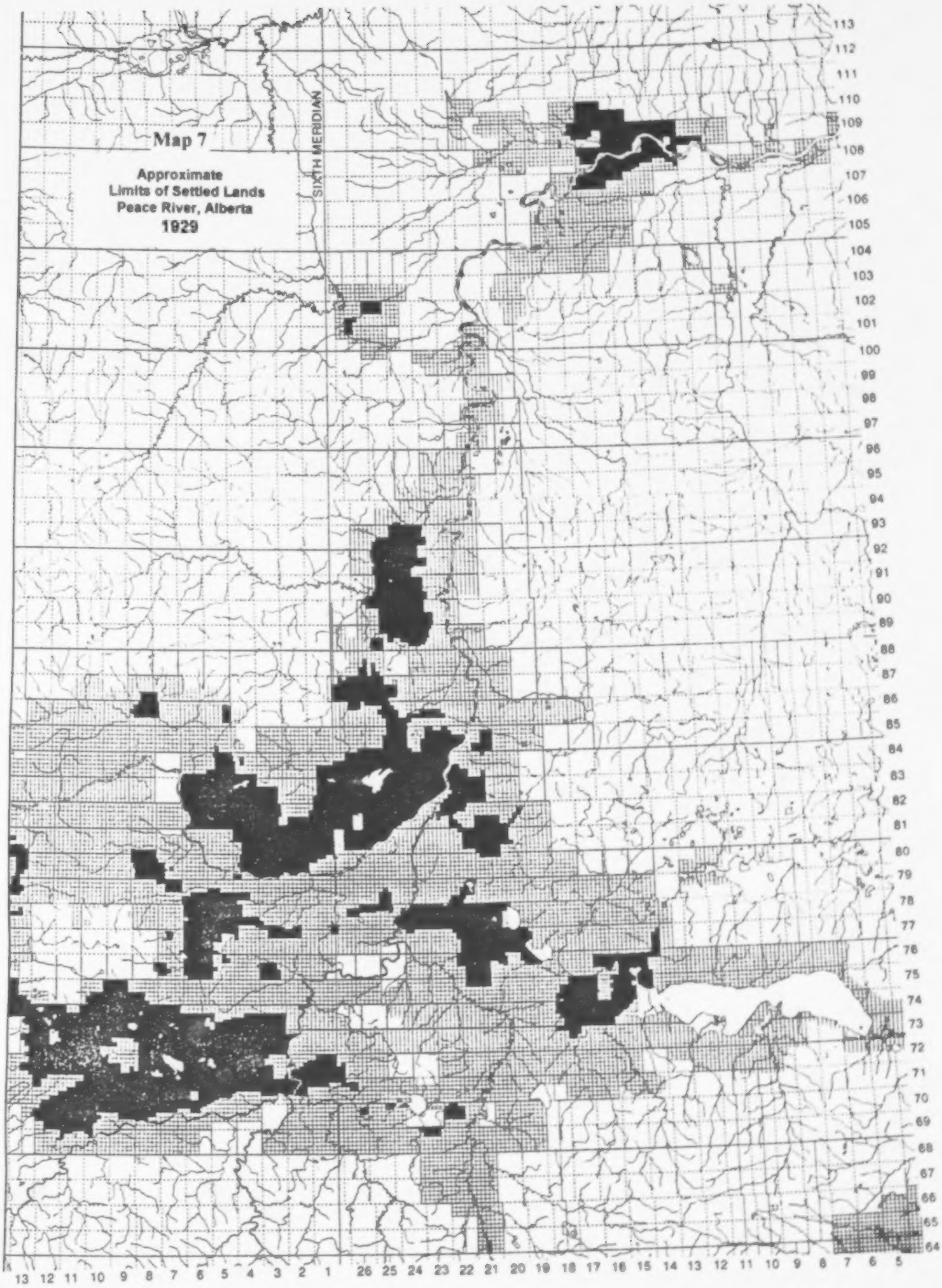
64
13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5



Map 7

Approximate
Limits of Settled Lands
Peace River, Alberta
1929

SIXTH MERIDIAN
113
112
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106
105
104
103
102
101
100
99
98
97
96
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94
93
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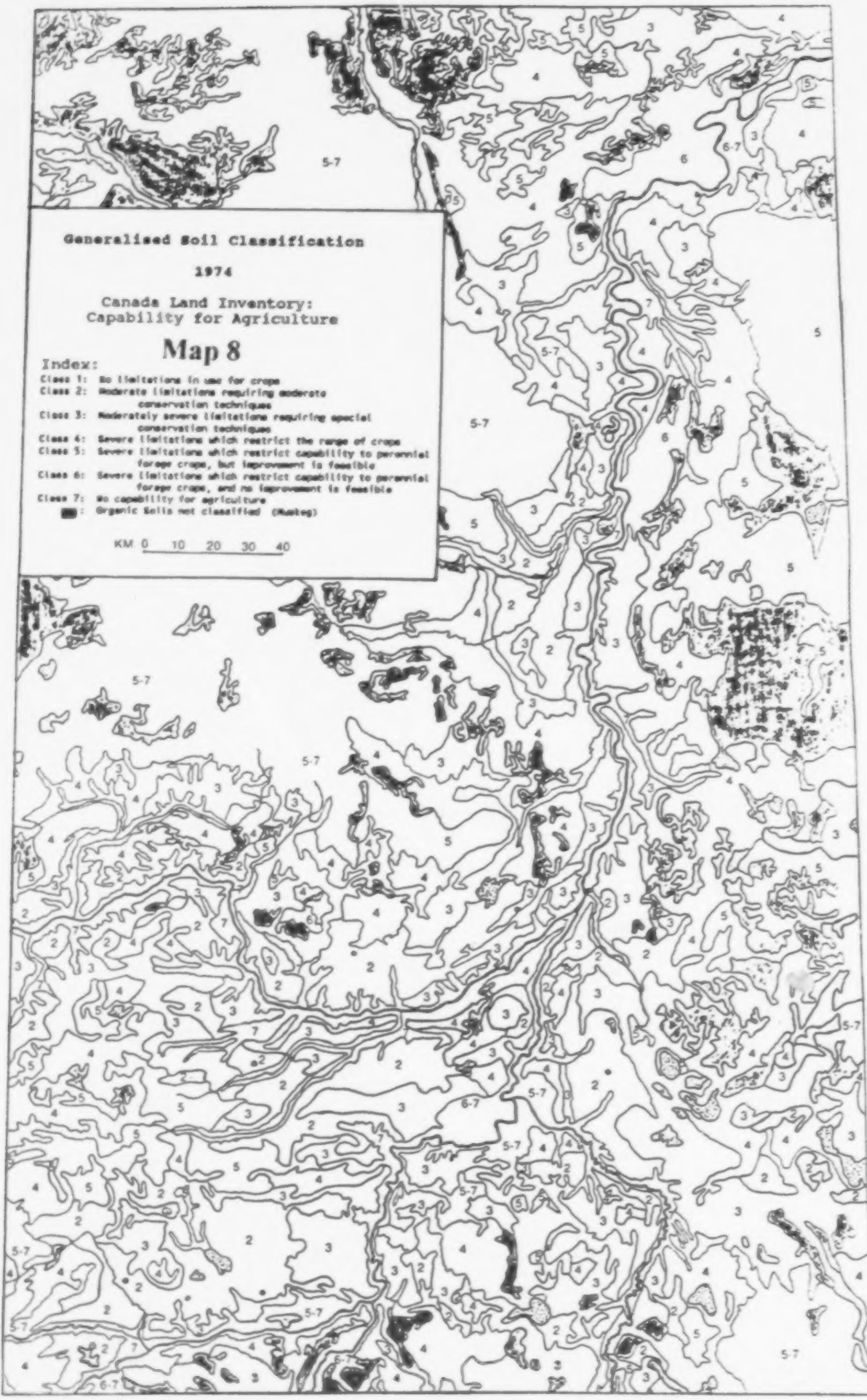
64
13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5



Generalised Soil Classification

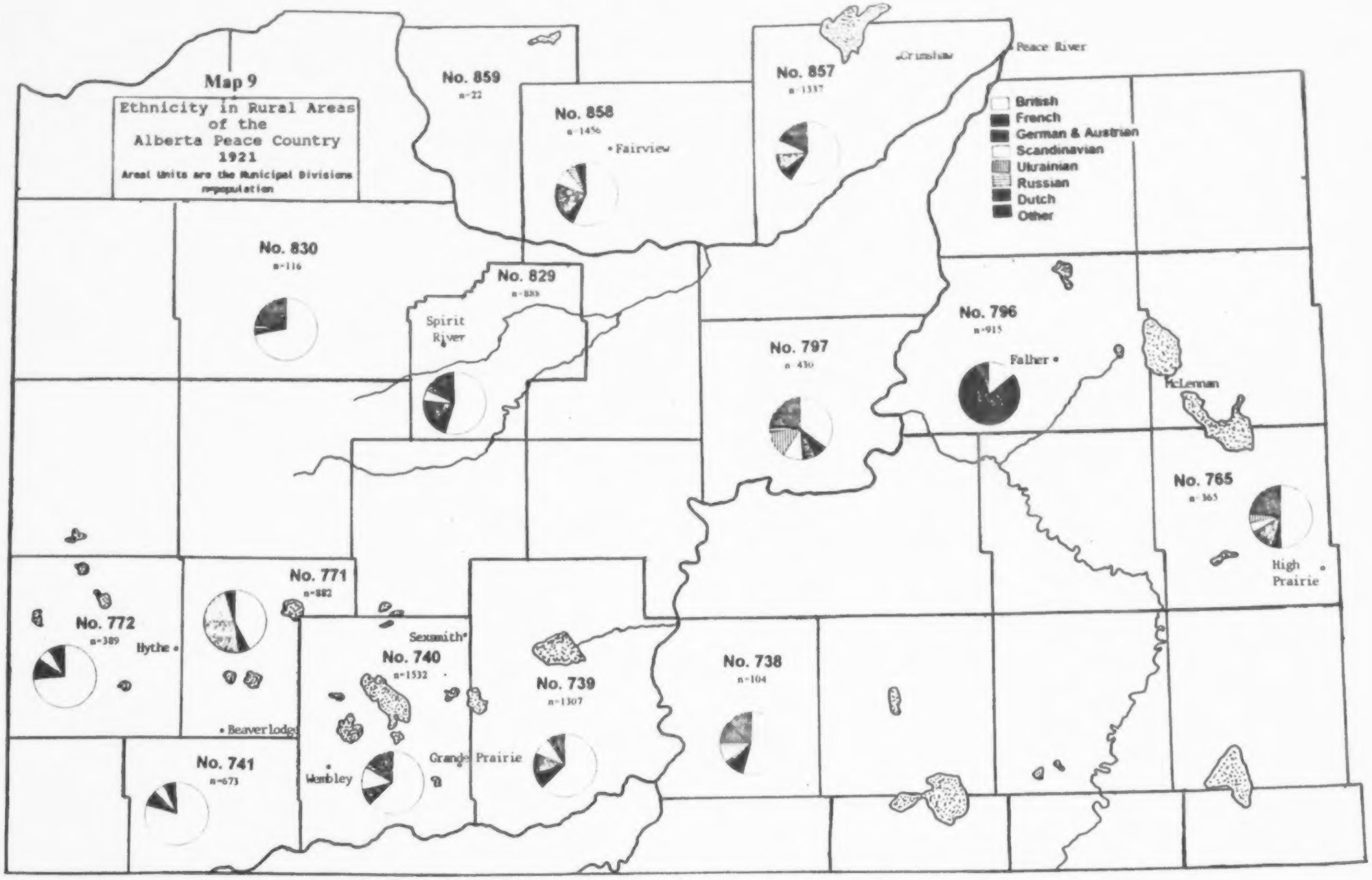
1974

Canada Land Inventory:
Capability for Agriculture

Map 8

Index:

- Class 1: No limitations in use for crops
- Class 2: Moderate limitations requiring moderate conservation techniques
- Class 3: Moderately severe limitations requiring special conservation techniques
- Class 4: Severe limitations which restrict the range of crops
- Class 5: Severe limitations which restrict capability to perennial forage crops, but improvement is feasible
- Class 6: Severe limitations which restrict capability to perennial forage crops, and no improvement is feasible
- Class 7: No capability for agriculture
- ■: Organic Soils not classified (Muskeg)

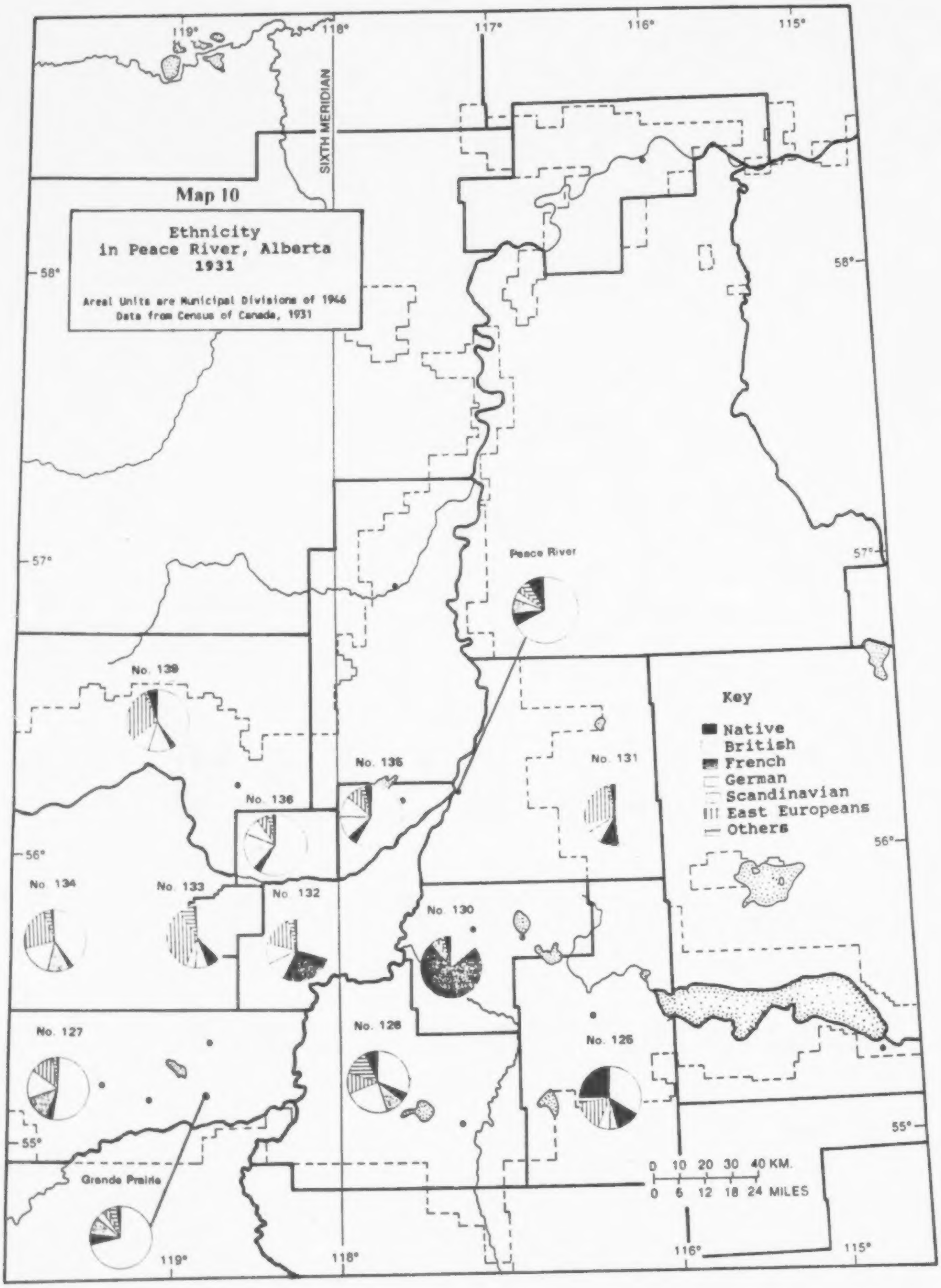


Map 9

Ethnicity in Rural Areas of the Alberta Peace Country 1921

Areal Units are the Municipal Divisions
n=population

British
French
German & Austrian
Scandinavian
Ukrainian
Russian
Dutch
Other
No. 859
n=22
No. 858
n=1456
Fairview
No. 857
n=1337
Grimshaw
Peace River
No. 830
n=116
No. 829
n=888
Spirit River
No. 797
n=430
No. 796
n=915
Falher
McLennan
No. 765
n=365
High Prairie
No. 772
n=389
Hythe
No. 771
n=882
Beaverlodge
No. 740
n=1532
Sexsmith
Wembley
Grande Prairie
No. 739
n=1307
No. 738
n=104
No. 741
n=673

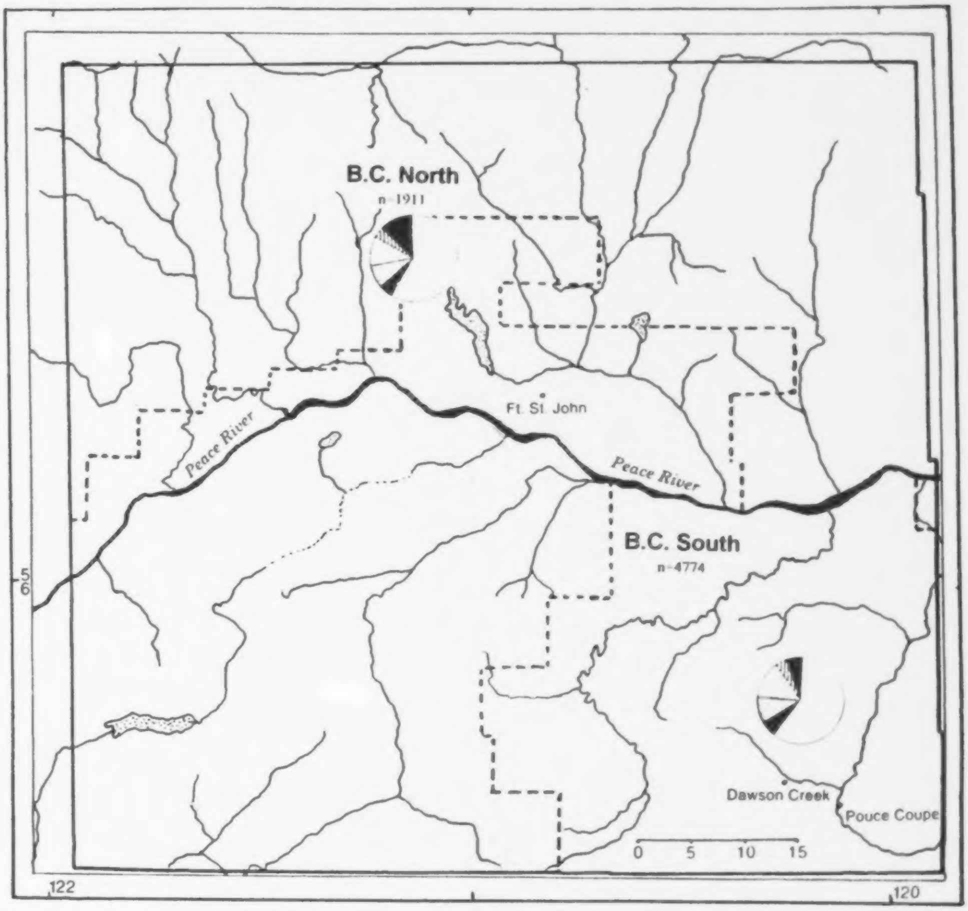


Map 10

Ethnicity in Peace River, Alberta 1931

Areal Units are Municipal Divisions of 1946
Data from Census of Canada, 1931

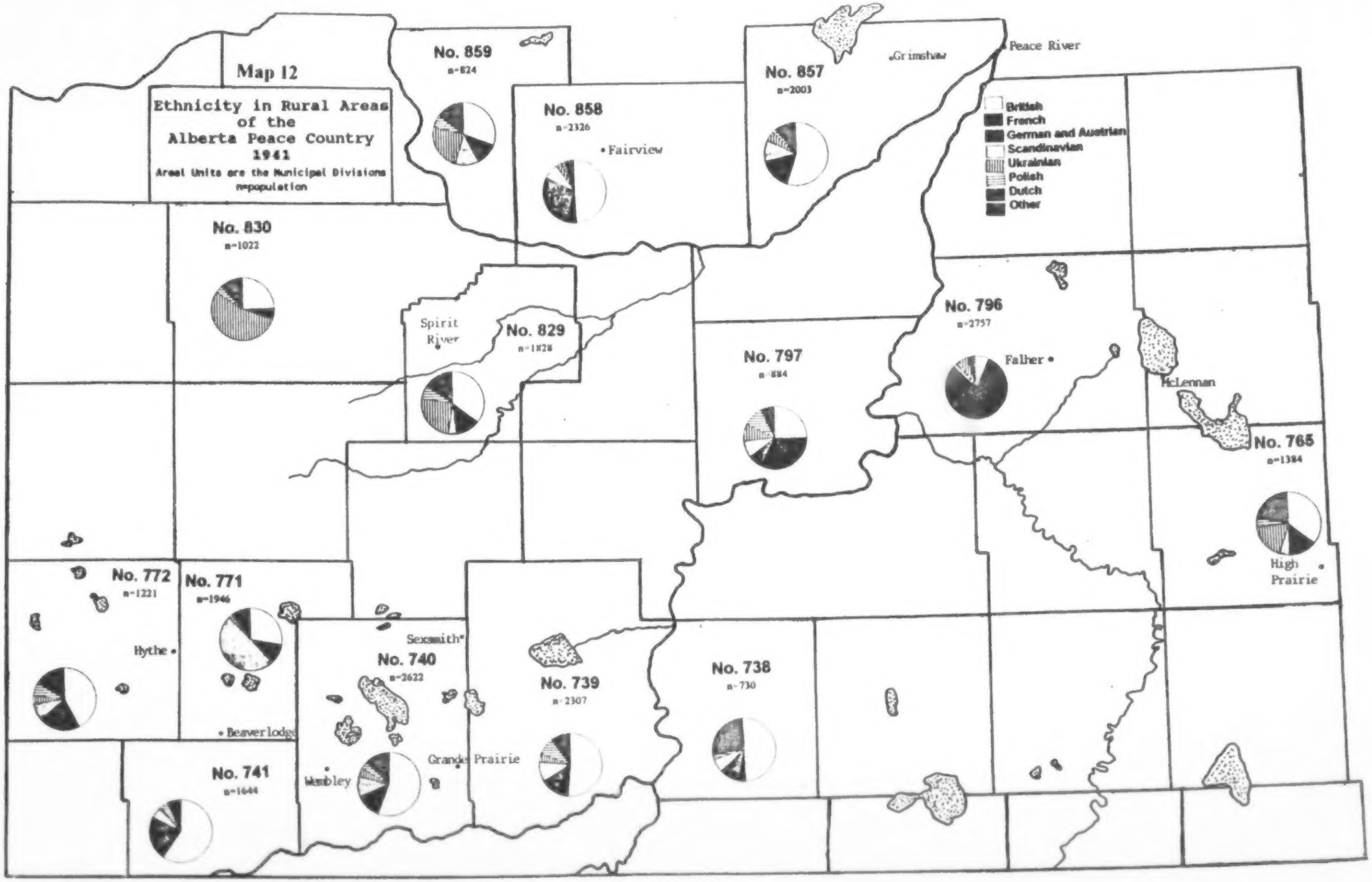
Key
■ Native
□ British
▨ French
□ German
□ Scandinavian
||| East Europeans
— Others
SIXTH MERIDIAN
119°
118°
117°
116°
115°
58°
57°
56°
55°
Peace River
Grande Prairie
No. 139
No. 138
No. 136
No. 131
No. 134
No. 133
No. 132
No. 130
No. 127
No. 128
No. 125
0 10 20 30 40 KM.
0 6 12 18 24 MILES


B.C. North
n=1911
Ft. St. John
Peace River
Peace River
B.C. South
n=4774
Dawson Creek
Pouce Coupe
0
5
10
15
56
122
120

Map 11 Ethnicity in the Peace River Block

1931

☐ British
☐ Scandinavian
■ French
▥ Other European
▨ Western European
■ Native

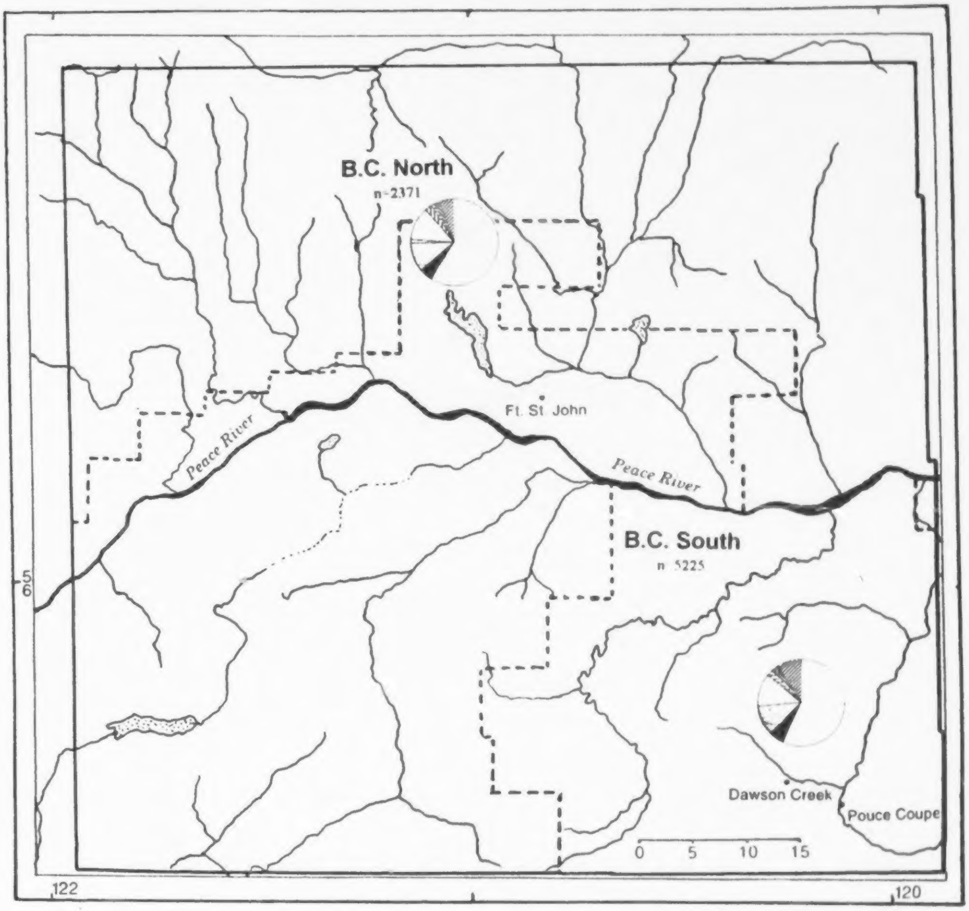


Map 12

Ethnicity in Rural Areas
of the
Alberta Peace Country
1941

Areal Units are the Municipal Divisions
n=population

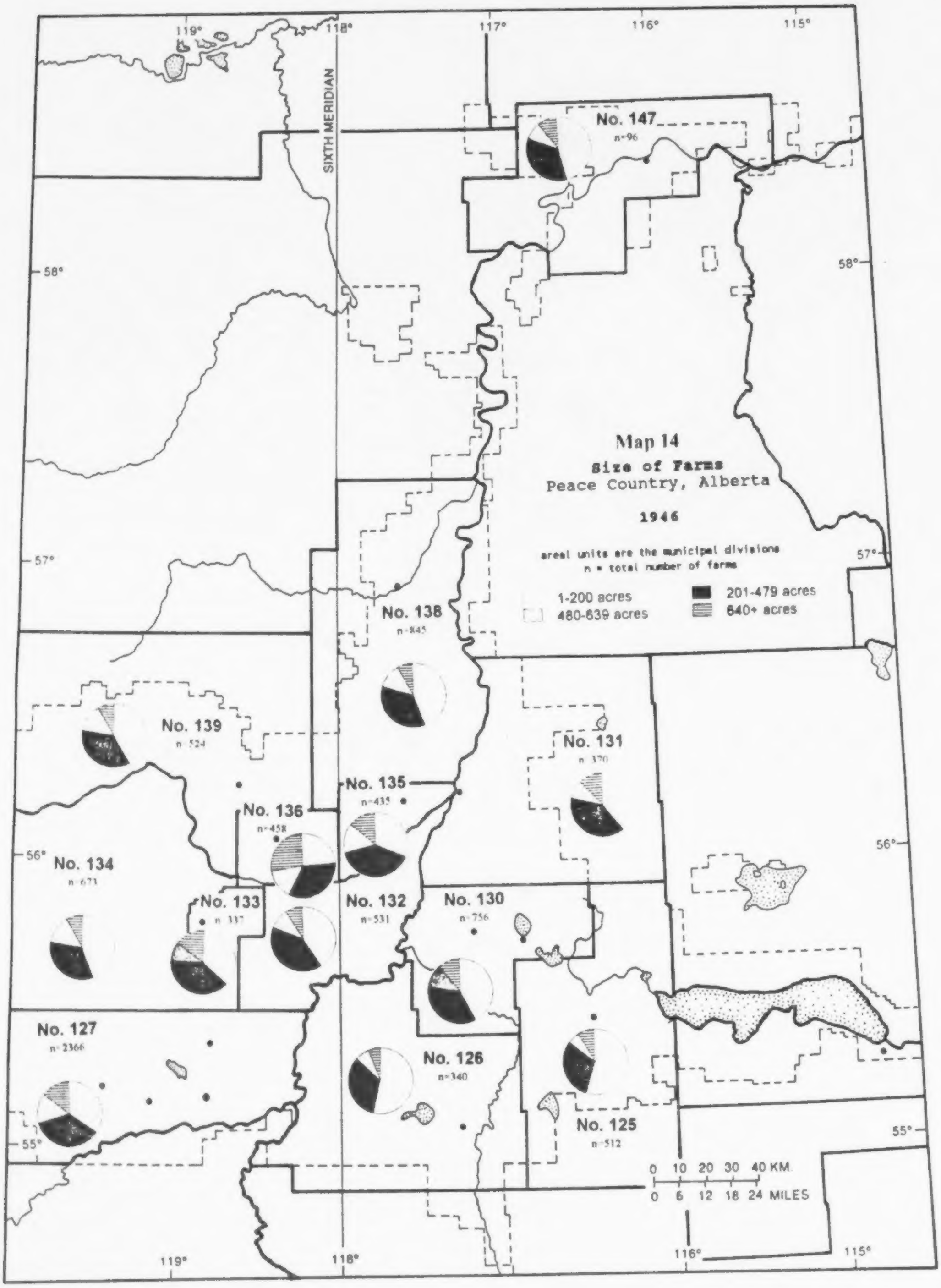
No. 859
n=824
No. 858
n=2326
Fairview
No. 857
n=2003
Grimshaw
Peace River
British
French
German and Austrian
Scandinavian
Ukrainian
Polish
Dutch
Other
No. 830
n=1022
Spirit River
No. 829
n=1828
No. 797
n=884
No. 796
n=2757
Falher
McLennan
No. 765
n=1384
High Prairie
No. 772
n=1221
Hythe
No. 771
n=1946
Beaverlodge
Sexsmith
No. 740
n=2622
Wembley
Grande Prairie
No. 739
n=2307
No. 738
n=730
No. 741
n=1644


B.C. North
n=2371
Ft. St. John
Peace River
Peace River
B.C. South
n=5225
Dawson Creek
Pouce Coupe
0
5
10
15
56
122
120

Map 13 Ethnicity in the Peace River Block, B.C

1941

☐ British
☐ Scandinavian
▦ Dutch
■ French
▥ Ukrainian
▦ Other
☐ German & Austrian
▤ Polish



Map 14

Size of Farms

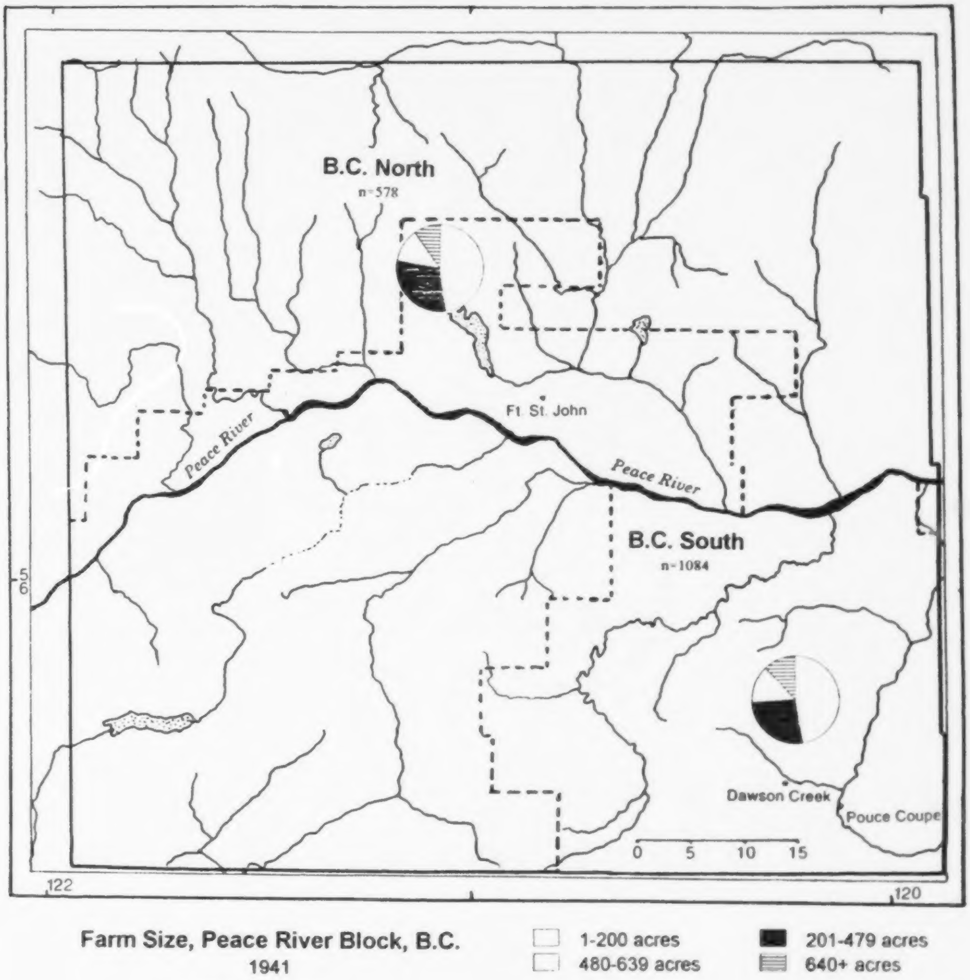
Peace Country, Alberta

1946

areal units are the municipal divisions

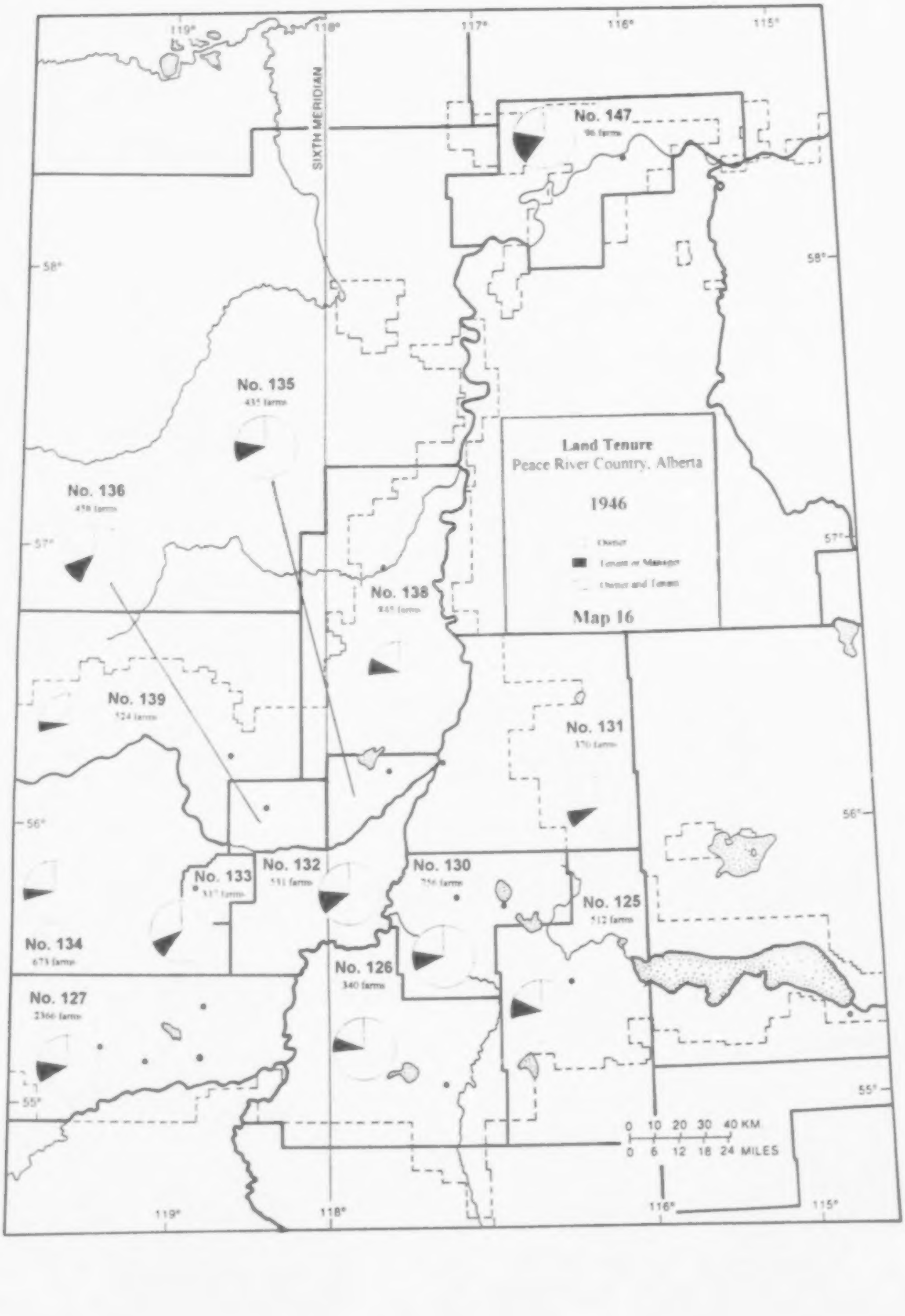
n = total number of farms

119°
118°
117°
116°
115°
SIXTH MERIDIAN
No. 147
n=96
58°
58°
57°
57°
1-200 acres
480-639 acres
201-479 acres
640+ acres
No. 138
n=845
No. 139
n=524
No. 131
n=370
No. 135
n=435
No. 136
n=458
56°
56°
No. 134
n=673
No. 133
n=337
No. 132
n=531
No. 130
n=756
No. 127
n=2366
No. 126
n=340
No. 125
n=512
55°
55°
0 10 20 30 40 KM
0 6 12 18 24 MILES
119°
118°
116°
115°


B.C. North
n=578
Ft. St. John
Peace River
Peace River
B.C. South
n=1084
Dawson Creek
Pouce Coupe
0 5 10 15
122
120
56
☐ 1-200 acres
■ 201-479 acres
☐ 480-639 acres
▤ 640+ acres

Farm Size, Peace River Block, B.C.
1941
n=total number of farms

Map 15

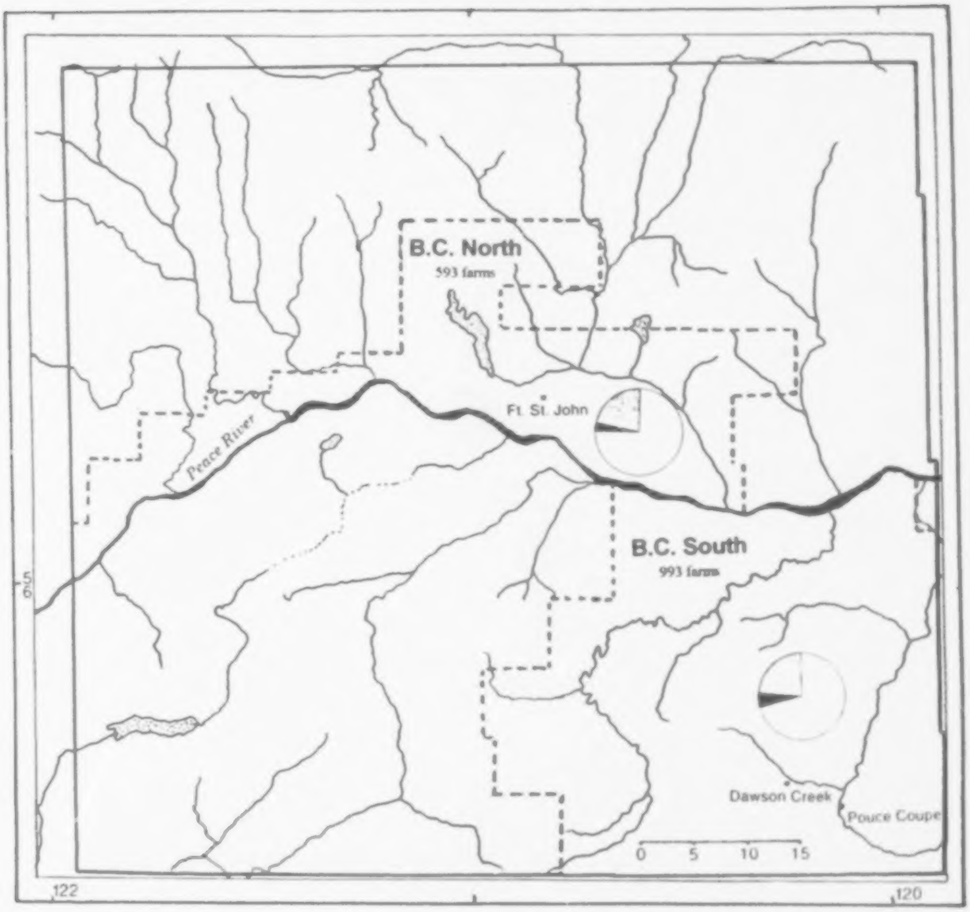


Land Tenure
Peace River Country, Alberta

1946

Map 16

119°
118°
117°
116°
115°
SIXTH MERIDIAN
58°
57°
56°
55°
No. 147
96 farms
No. 135
435 farms
No. 136
458 farms
No. 138
845 farms
No. 139
524 farms
No. 131
370 farms
No. 133
317 farms
No. 132
531 farms
No. 130
756 farms
No. 125
512 farms
No. 134
673 farms
No. 126
340 farms
No. 127
2366 farms
Owner
Tenant or Manager
Owner and Tenant
0 10 20 30 40 KM
0 6 12 18 24 MILES

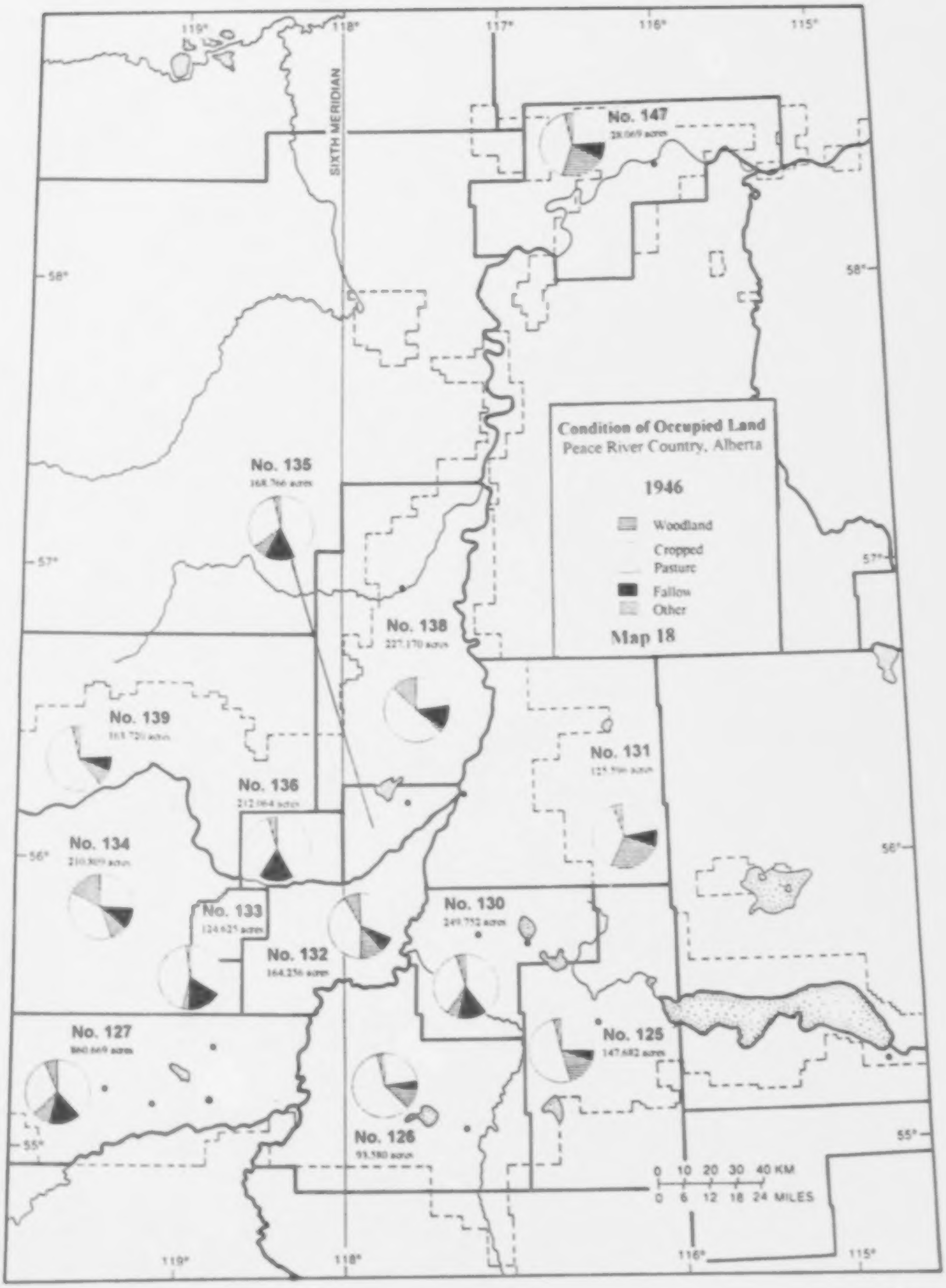

B.C. North
593 farms
Ft. St. John
Peace River
B.C. South
993 farms
Dawson Creek
Pouce Coupe
0
5
10
15
122
120
56

Land Tenure
Peace River Country, B.C.

☐ Owner
■ Tenant or Manager
▨ Owner and Tenant

1951

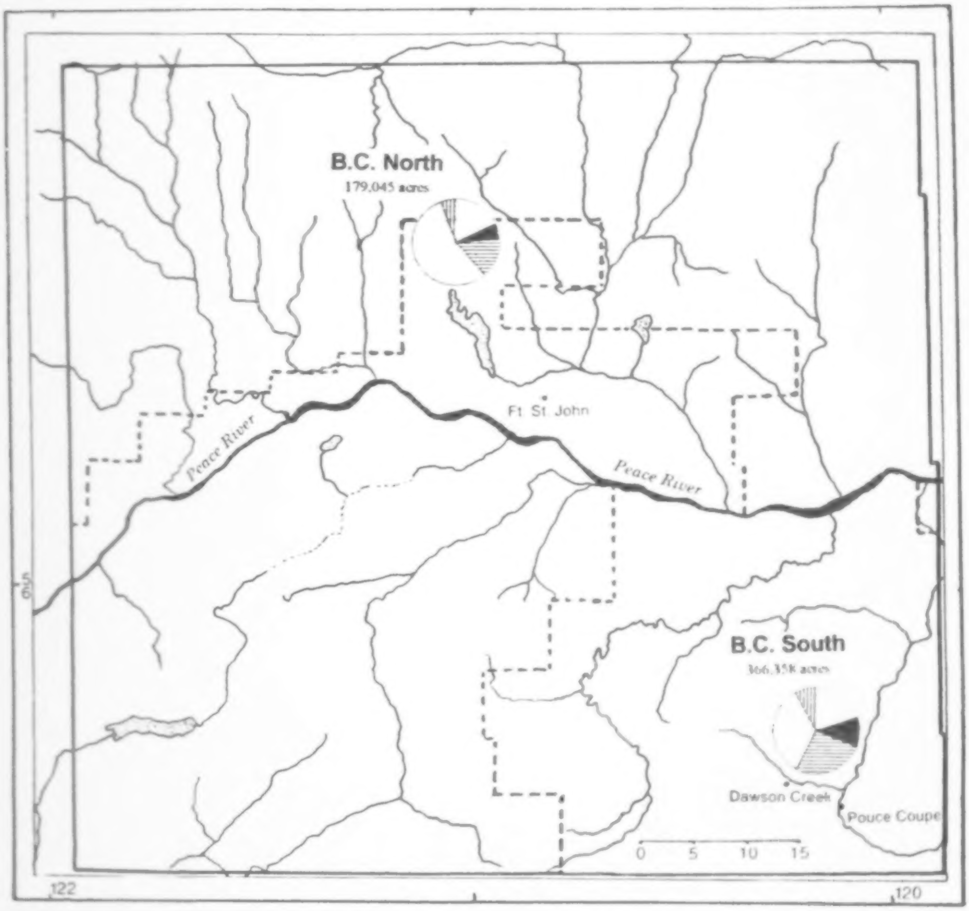
Map 17


119°
118°
117°
116°
115°
SIXTH MERIDIAN
58°
57°
56°
55°
No. 147
28,069 acres
No. 135
168,766 acres
No. 138
227,170 acres
No. 139
163,720 acres
No. 136
212,064 acres
No. 131
No. 134
210,309 acres
No. 133
124,625 acres
No. 132
164,256 acres
No. 130
249,752 acres
No. 127
860,669 acres
No. 126
93,580 acres
No. 125
147,682 acres
Woodland
Cropped
Pasture
Fallow
Other
0 10 20 30 40 KM
0 6 12 18 24 MILES

Condition of Occupied Land
Peace River Country, Alberta

1946

Map 18

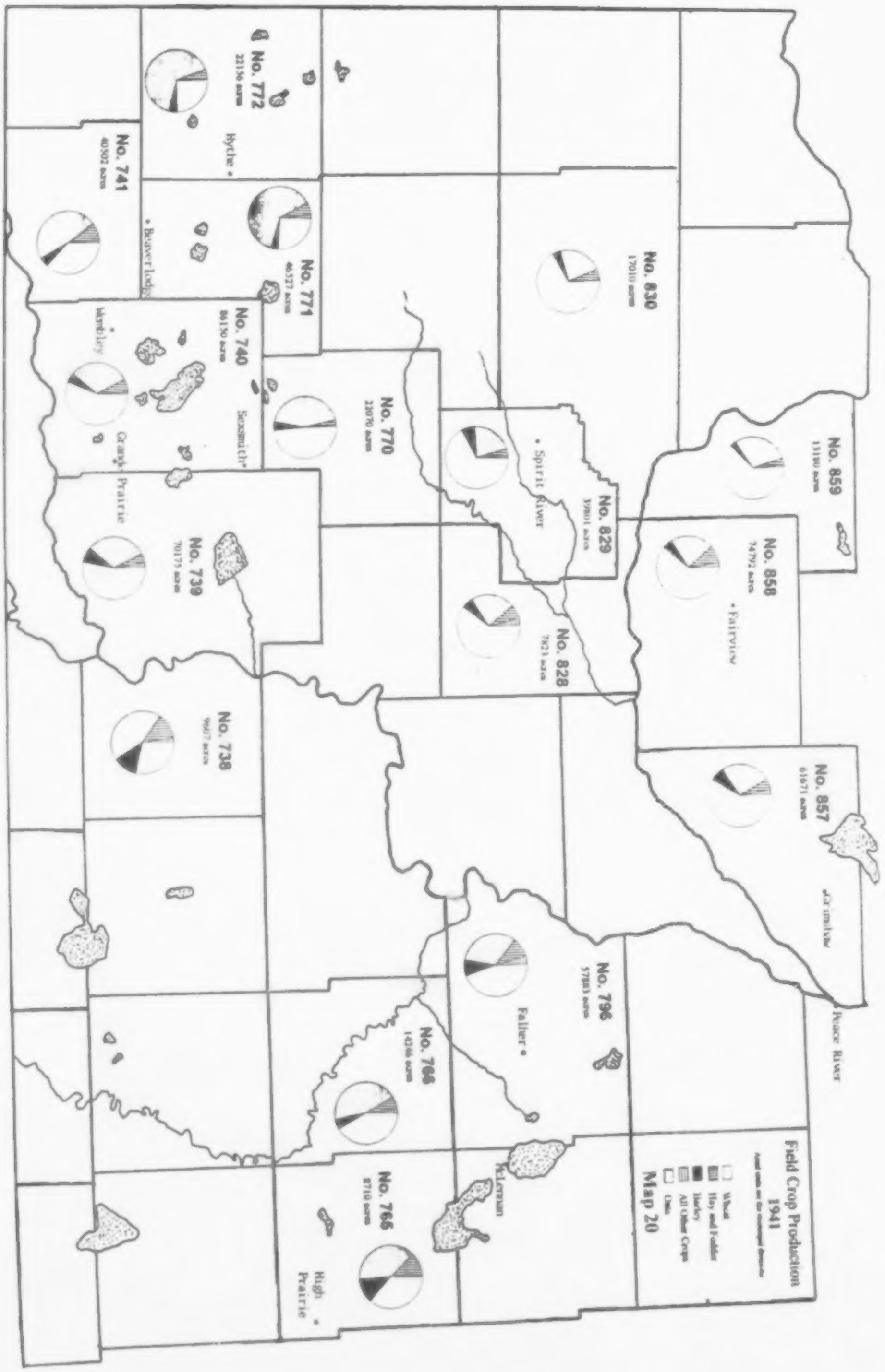

B.C. North
179,045 acres
Ft. St. John
Peace River
Peace River
56
B.C. South
366,358 acres
Dawson Creek
Pouce Coupe
0 5 10 15
122
120

Condition of Occupied Land
Peace River Country, B.C.

Cropped
Pasture
Fallow
Other
Woodland

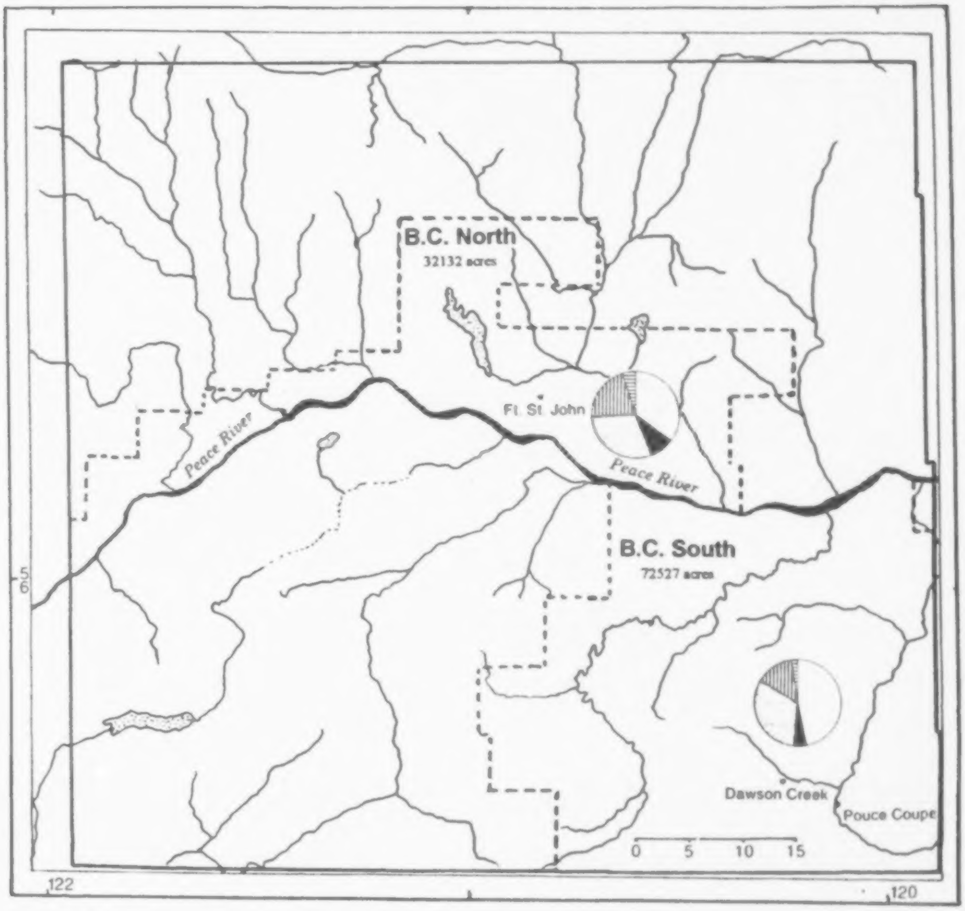
1941

Map 19


No. 772
22156 acres
Hythe
No. 741
40302 acres
No. 771
46327 acres
Beaverlodge
No. 740
86150 acres
Wembley
Sexsmith
Grande Prairie
No. 739
70175 acres
No. 770
22070 acres
No. 738
9617 acres
No. 830
17010 acres
No. 829
39801 acres
Spirit River
No. 828
7821 acres
No. 859
13180 acres
No. 858
74792 acres
Fairview
No. 857
61671 acres
Peace River
No. 796
57883 acres
Falher
No. 766
14246 acres
No. 765
8710 acres
McLennan
High Prairie
Wheat
Hay and Fodder
Barley
All Other Crops
Oats

Field Crop Production
1941

Map 20

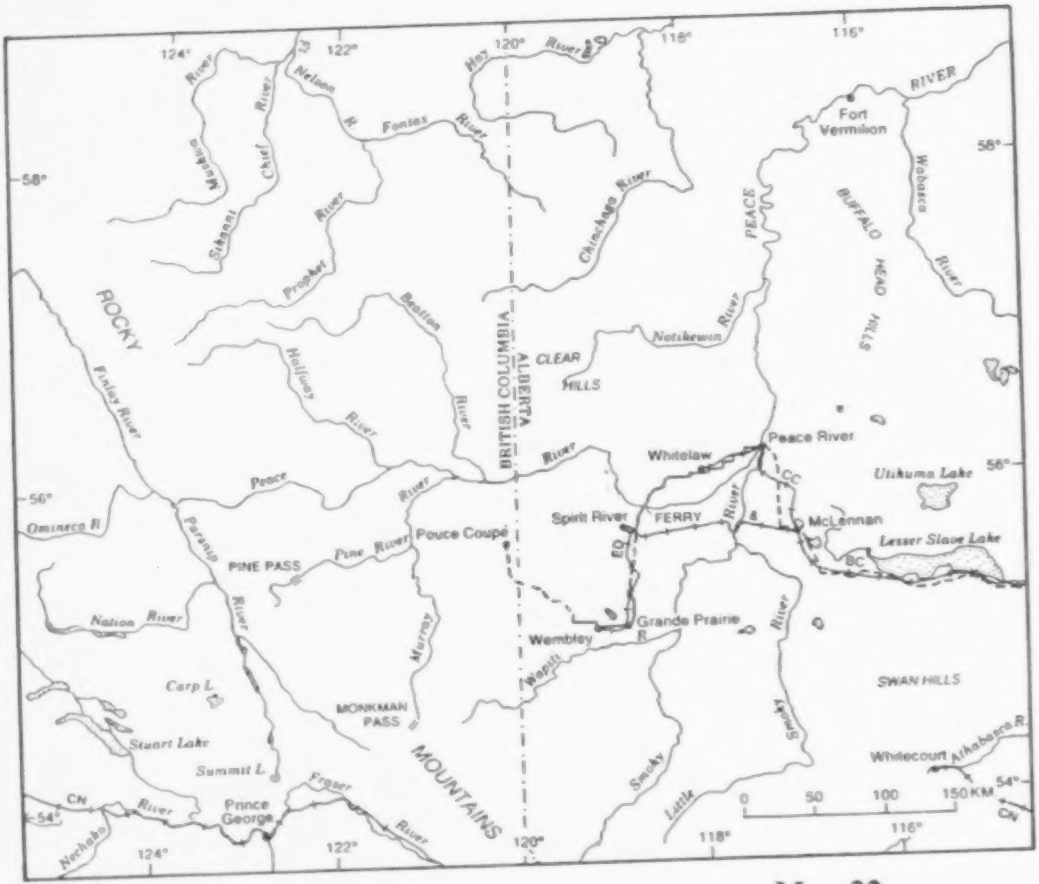

B.C. North
32132 acres
Ft. St. John
Peace River
Peace River
B.C. South
72527 acres
Dawson Creek
Pouce Coupe
0 5 10 15
56
122
120

Field Crop Production
Peace Country, British Columbia

1941

☐ Wheat
▥ Hay and Fodder
■ Barley
▤ All Other Crops
◪ Oats

Map 21


124°
122°
120°
118°
116°
58°
56°
54°
Hay River
Nelson R.
Fontas River
Muskwa River
Chief River
Sikanni Chief River
Prophet River
Chinchaga River
Fort Vermilion
RIVER
PEACE
BUFFALO HEAD HILLS
Wabasca River
ROCKY
Beatton River
Halfway River
Finlay River
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
CLEAR HILLS
Notikewin River
Peace River
Whitelaw
Utikuma Lake
Peace River
CC
Omineca R.
Parsnip River
Spirit River
FERRY
ED
McLennan
Lesser Slave Lake
BC
PINE PASS
Pine River
Pouce Coupé
Nation River
Grande Prairie
Wembley
Wapiti R.
Murray
River
SWAN HILLS
Carp L.
MONKMAN PASS
Stuart Lake
Summit L.
MOUNTAINS
Smoky
Little Smoky
Smoky River
Whitecourt
Athabasca R.
0 50 100 150 KM
CN
Nechako River
Prince George
Fraser River

Transportation routes:1924

Map 22

RAILWAYS

ED & BC Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia

CC Central Canada

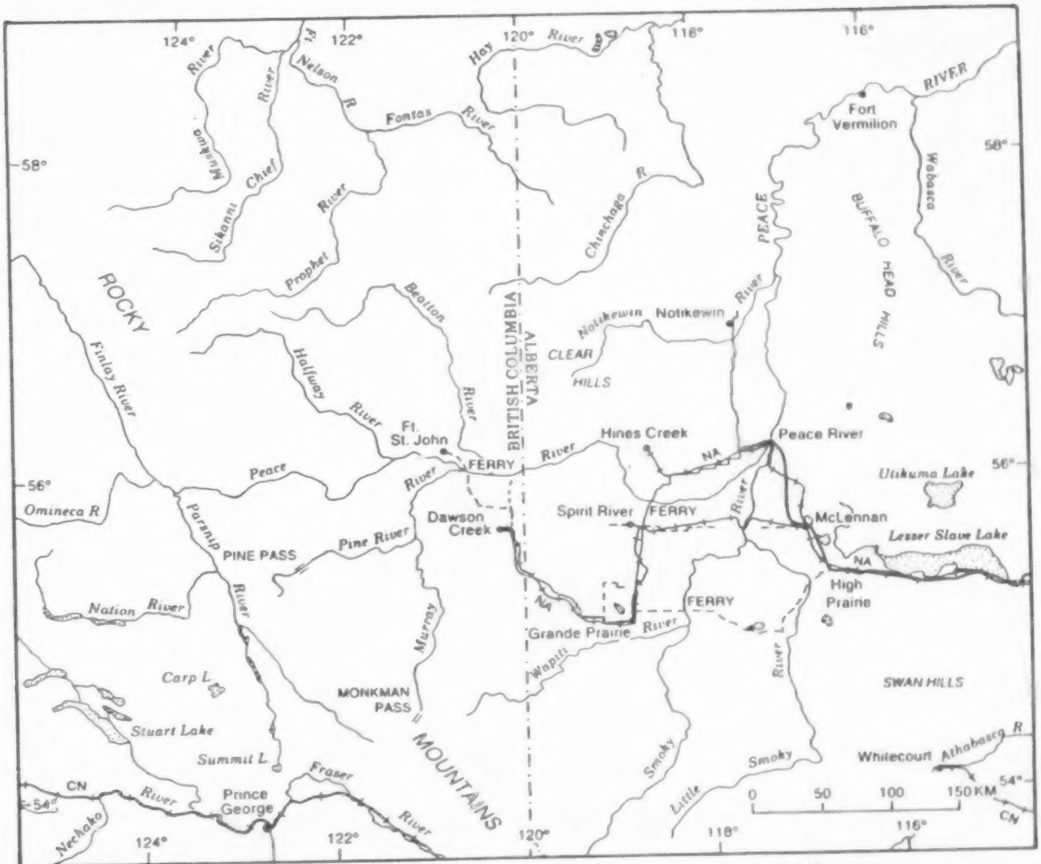
CN Canadian National Railways

ROADS

Non-graded

—

Projected


124°
122°
120°
118°
116°
58°
56°
54°
Hay River
Nelson R.
Fontas River
Muskwa River
Sikanni Chief River
Prophet River
Chinchaga R.
PEACE RIVER
Fort Vermilion
Wabasca River
BUFFALO HEAD HILLS
ROCKY
MOUNTAINS
Finlay River
Beatton River
Halfway River
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
Notikewin
Notikewin
CLEAR HILLS
Ft. St. John
FERRY
Hines Creek
NA
Peace River
Utikuma Lake
Omineca R
Peace
River
Parsnip River
PINE PASS
Pine River
Dawson Creek
Spirit River
FERRY
McLennan
Lesser Slave Lake
NA
High Prairie
Nation River
Murray
NA
FERRY
Grande Prairie
Wapiti River
Carp L
MONKMAN PASS
SWAN HILLS
Stuart Lake
Summit L
Smoky
Little Smoky
Whitecourt
Athabasca R
CN
Prince George
Fraser River
Nechako
River
0
50
100
150 KM
CN

Transportation routes: 1932

Map 23

RAILWAYS

NA Northern Alberta Railways

CN Canadian National Railways

ROADS

Graded

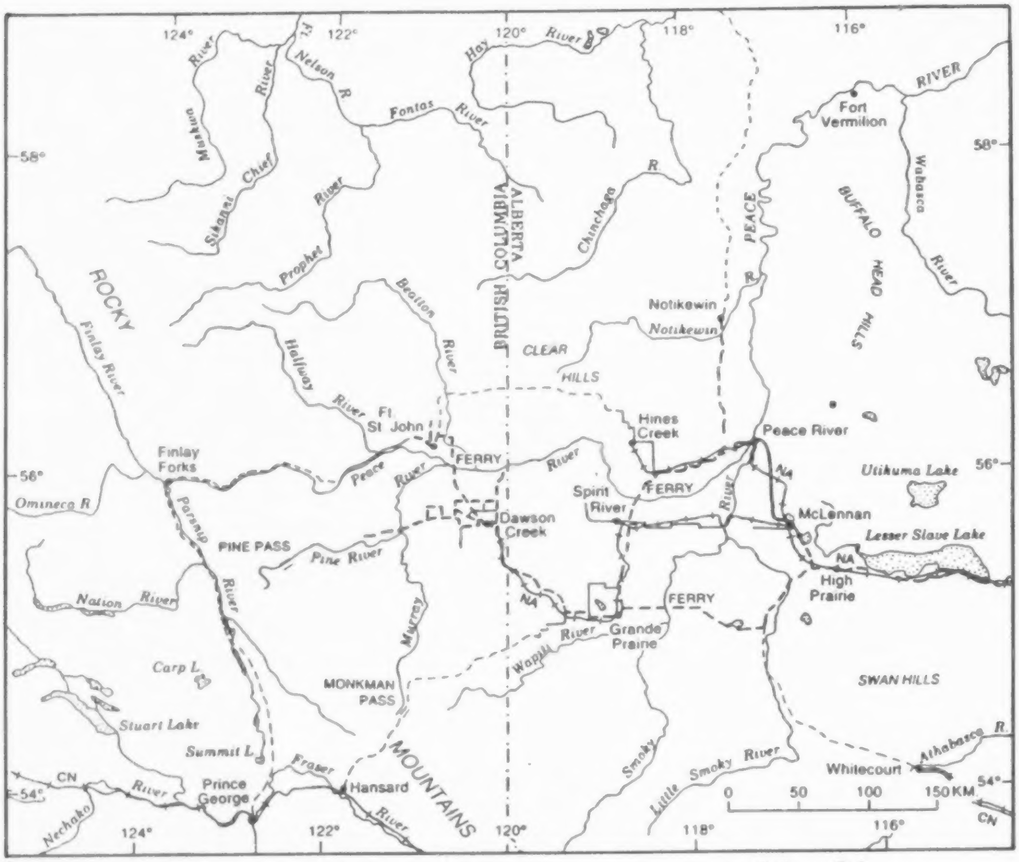
—— Earthen

Non-graded

——

Unimproved

- - -


124°
122°
120°
118°
116°
58°
56°
54°
Muskwa River
Sikanni Chief River
Nelson R
Fontas River
Hay River
Prophet River
Chinchaga R
PEACE R
Fort Vermilion
RIVER
Wabasca River
BUFFALO HEAD HILLS
ROCKY
Finlay River
Beatton River
Halfway River
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
CLEAR HILLS
Notikewin
Notikewin
Ft St John
FERRY
Hines Creek
Peace River
Utikuma Lake
Finlay Forks
Peace River
River
FERRY
NA
Omineca R
Spirit River
Dawson Creek
McLennan
Parsnip River
PINE PASS
Pine River
Lesser Slave Lake
NA
High Prairie
Nation River
NA
FERRY
Murray
Grande Prairie
Wapiti River
Carp L
MONKMAN PASS
SWAN HILLS
Stuart Lake
Summit L
MOUNTAINS
Smoky
Little Smoky River
Athabasca R
Whitecourt
CN
Prince George
Fraser
Hansard
River
Nechako
River
0
50
100
150 KM
CN

Transportation routes: 1941

Map 24

RAILWAYS

NA Northern Alberta Railways

CN Canadian National Railways

ROADS

Graded

—— Gravel

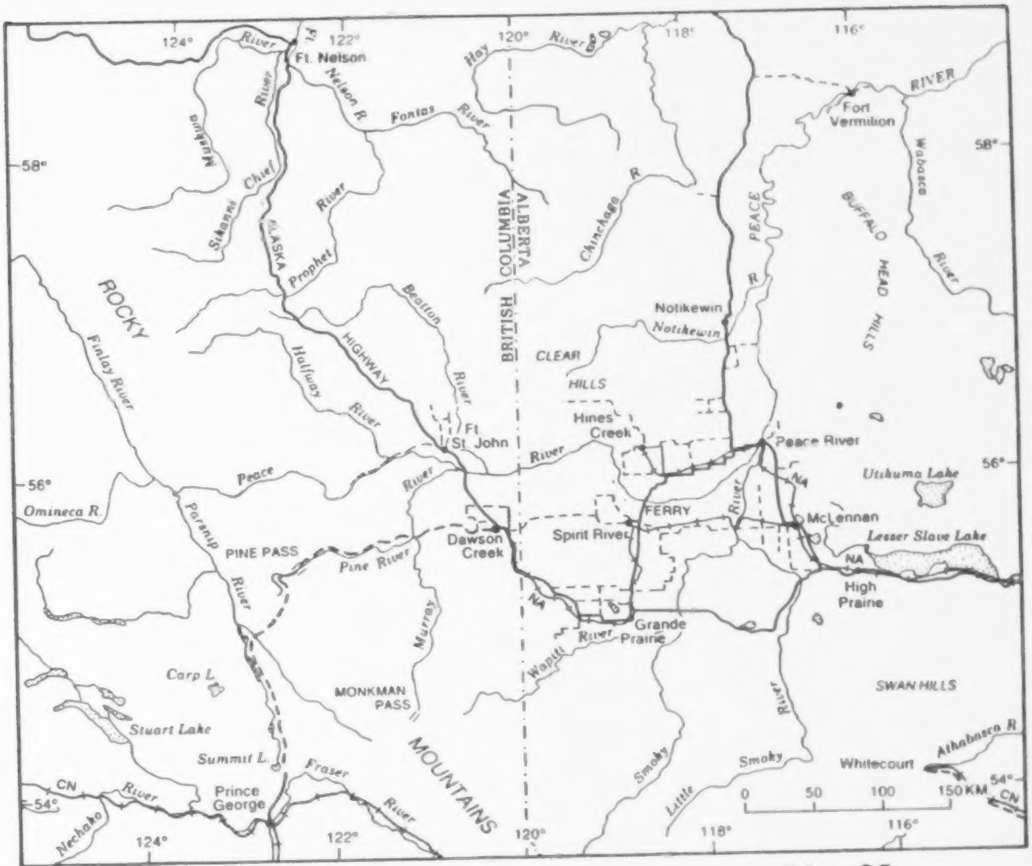
- - - Earthen

Non-graded

——

Proposed

- - -

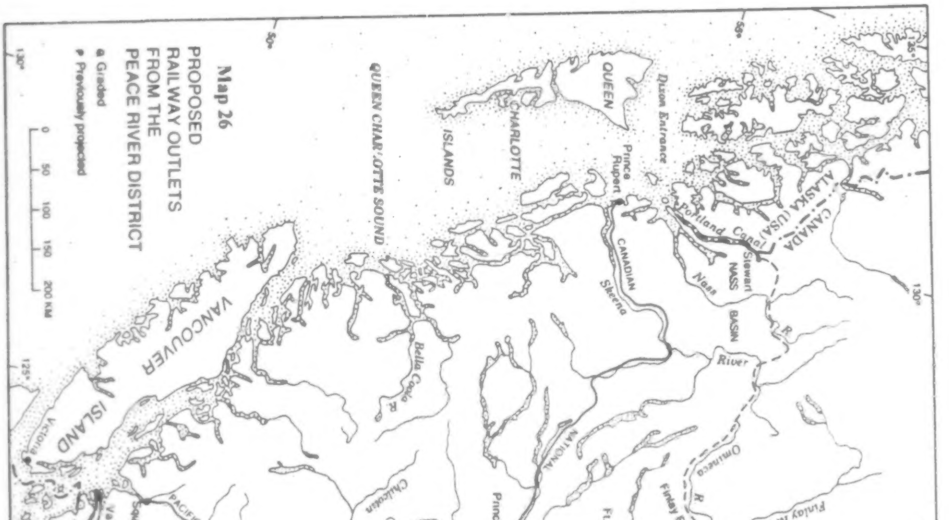

124°
122°
120°
118°
116°
58°
56°
54°
River
Ft. Nelson
Nelson R.
Fontas
River
Hay
River
Muskwa
River
Sikanni
Chief
River
ALASKA
Prophet
RIVER
Fort Vermilion
Wabasca
River
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
Chinchaga
R
PEACE
R
BUFFALO
HEAD
HILLS
ROCKY
Finlay River
HIGHWAY
Beatton
River
Halfway
River
Notikewin
Notikewin
CLEAR
HILLS
Hines Creek
Ft St. John
Peace River
Utikuma Lake
Peace
River
River
Omineca R.
Parsnip
River
PINE PASS
Pine River
Dawson Creek
FERRY
River
Spirit River
McLennan
NA
Lesser Slave Lake
High Prairie
Murray
Grande Prairie
Wapiti
River
Carp L.
MONKMAN PASS
SWAN HILLS
Stuart Lake
MOUNTAINS
Smoky
River
Summit L.
Fraser
River
Little
Smoky
Whitecourt
Athabasca R
CN
Nechako
River
Prince George
0
50
100
150 KM

Transportation routes: 1949 - 1952

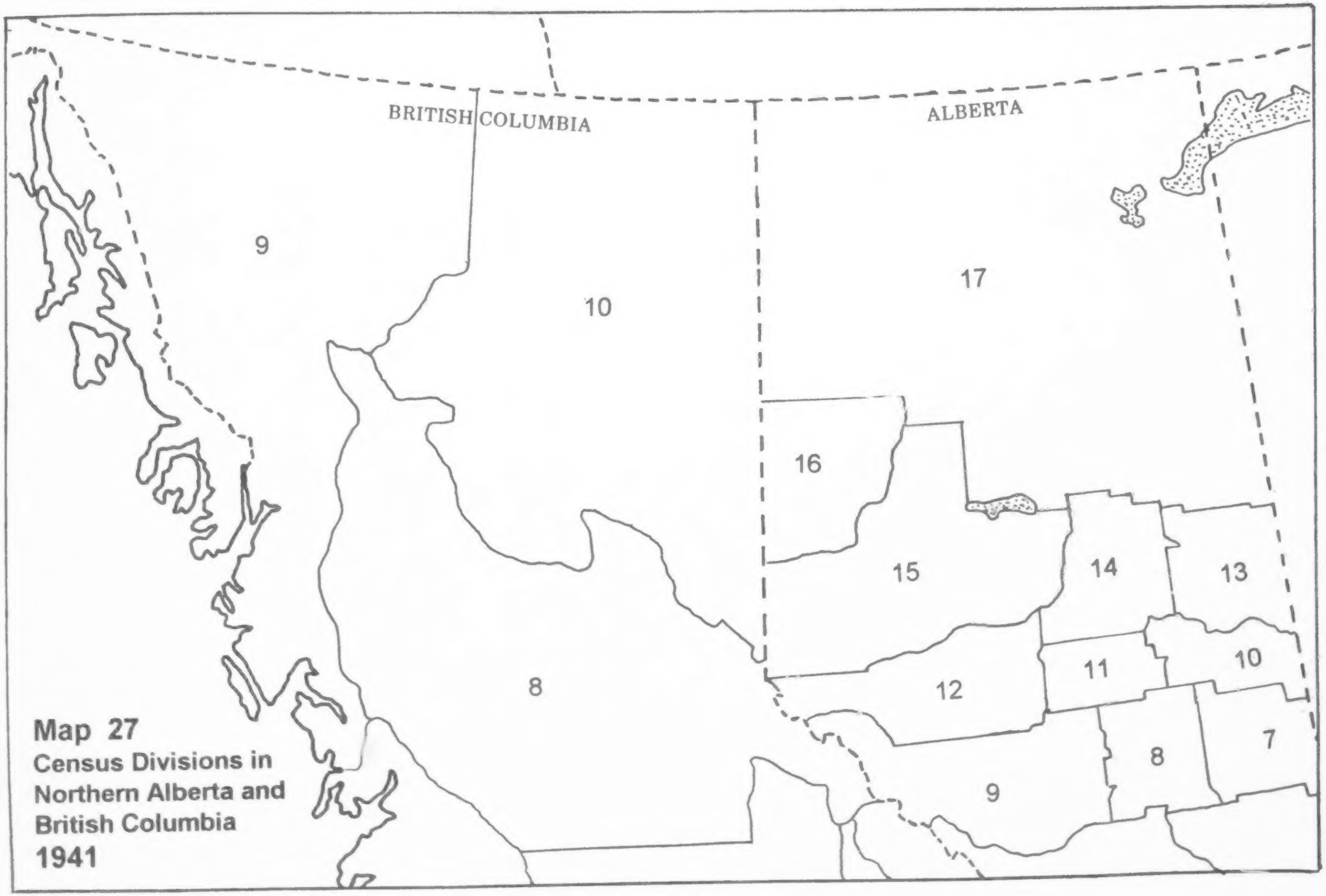
Map 25

RAILWAYS
NA Northern Alberta Railways
CN Canadian National Railways

ROADS
Trunk
—— Gravel
- - - Graded or being gravelled
District
—— Gravel
- - - Graded


Map 26
PROPOSED
RAILWAY OUTLETS
FROM THE
PEACE RIVER DISTRICT

a Graded
p Previously projected
0 50 100 150 200 KM
QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS
QUEEN CHARLOTTE SOUND
VANCOUVER ISLAND
Dixon Entrance
Prince Rupert
ALASKA (USA)
CANADA
Portland Canal
Stewart
NASS BASIN
Nass
Skeena
CANADIAN NATIONAL
Bella Coola R.
Victoria
Vancouver
Squamish
PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN
Lillooet
Clinton
CUT - OFF
Chilcotin River
Fraser River
Quesnel
Prince George
Aleza Lake
Summit L.
Ft. McLeod
Finlay Forks
Finlay River
Omineca R.
Peace Pass
Pine Pass
Monkman Pass
Wapiti Pass
Halfway R.
Ft. St. John
Dawson Creek
Pouce Coupe
Spirit River
Hines Creek
Wembley
Grande Prairie
Peace River
Ft. Nelson R.
Beatton R.
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
Hay River
To Boundary of Province
Notikewin
Lesser Slave L.
Peace River
L. Claire
Athabasca R.
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
Smoky
Wapiti
Little Smoky
Tete Jaune
Jasper
Yellowhead Pass
Brule
The Hoppe Coalfields
Obed
Edson
Whitecourt
NORTHERN ALBERTA RAILWAYS
NAR
CNR
CPR
Edmonton
North Saskatchewan
Calgary
Kicking Horse Pass
Crowsnest Pass
Bow
Oldman
Lethbridge
Kamloops
Thompson R.
North Thompson
CANADIAN NATIONAL RYS
Okanagan L.
Columbia
Kootenay
Kootenay L.
CANADIAN PACIFIC
CANADA
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
50°
55°
115°
120°
125°
130°


BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
9
10
8
17
16
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7

Map 27
Census Divisions in Northern Alberta and British Columbia
1941